“The changing governance of higher education systems in Post-Soviet countries”

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Preliminary remarks and acknowledgements

This study was begun in the context of my work first as a researcher and consultant at the Center for Higher Education Development (CHE Consult) in Germany and was continued at the Laboratory for Higher Education Development at the Institute of Education of the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, while being academically supervised by Prof. Dr. Matthias Middell at the Graduate School Global and Area Studies of the University of Leipzig.

Researching and writing this dissertation was a great personal experience which allowed me to delve deeply into the history, present, and future of higher education in three starkly different post-Soviet countries. It has allowed me to witness first-hand how higher education worldwide is indeed on the path of greater convergence to common ideals of governance, to becoming part of a European Higher Education Area, while at the same time conserving distinct features and institutions of the past. I felt very fortunate to have the opportunity to explore the culture and politics of these three countries in depth. Without writing this dissertation, I would have had neither the time to study in-depth three countries of the post-Soviet sphere, nor could I have developed my Russian-language abilities to a level where interviews with policy-makers became possible and actually enjoyable for both sides. In more than one way, this dissertation has been the key to opening the door to a vast cultural-linguistic space to me. What I enjoyed most about the topic of my dissertation was to develop a deeper understanding of how higher education systems evolve to cope with old and new challenges, thereby making me reconsider my own unquestioned assumptions about the German and international HE traditions that I had been previously familiar with. In many instances, an intercultural 'translation' exercise was required, of terminology as of context, to understand the reasons for certain structures, behaviors and institutional patterns that initially puzzled me.

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Glossary

ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
AKKORK	Agency for Quality Assurance and Career Development - *Agentstvo po kontrolyu kachestva i razvitiyu kar'yery* (Russia)
ANACIP	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education - *Agenţia Naţională de Asigurare a Calităţii în Învăţământul Profesional* (Moldova)
APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Network
ARACIS	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education - Agenția Română de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Superior (Romania)
ATHENA	TEMPUS project “Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighboring Area"
BA	Bachelor's Degree
CCES	Committee for Supervision and Attestation in Education and Science (Kazakhstan)
CEENQA	Network of Central and Eastern European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
CHE	Centre for Higher Education Development (Germany)
CNEAA	National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (*Consiliul Naţional de Evaluare şi Acreditare Academică* (Moldova)
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EI	Education International
ENIC-NARIC	European Network of Information Centers - National Academic Recognition Information Centers
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQA	External Quality Assurance
EQAF	European Quality Assurance Forum
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA
ESU	European Students Union
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUA	European Universities Association
EUniAM	TEMPUS project “Enhancing University Autonomy in Moldova"

EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
FEPO	Internet-based assessment of learning outcomes and online exams in vocational education (Russia)
FFP	Fitness-for-purpose Approach
FSES	Federal State Educational Standards (Russia)
FSU	Former Soviet Union
FTSPRO	Government Development programs for education (Russia)
GIFO	State financial obligations to individuals - *gosudarstvennye imennye finansovye obyazatel'stva (Russia)*
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IAAR	Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (Kazakhstan)
IEP	Institutional Evaluation Program
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IQAA	Independent Quality Assurance Agency (Kazakhstan)
ISO	International Standards Organization
LOs	Learning Outcomes
MA	Master's Degree
MSSR	Moldovan Soviet Socialist republic (MSSR)
NCPA	National Center for Public Accreditation (Russia)
NPM	New Public Management
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUS	National Union of Students
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	OECD Program for international student assessment
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QF	Qualifications Framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area
QUAEM	TEMPUS project "*Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Moldova*"
RUDN	*Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*
SBA	Standards-based Approach in quality assurance
SPED	State Program of Education Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO-CEPES	UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (Centre Européen pour l'Enseignement
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (short: Soviet Union)
VAK	Higher Attestation Commission - *vysshaya attestatsionnaya komissiya*
VOUD	"Comprehensive National Mid-Term Tests" - *vneshnaya otsenka uchebnhkh dostizhenii (Kazakhstan)*
WB	The World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

1 Abstract

After 25 years of transformations of higher education systems in post-Soviet countries, the single Soviet model of higher education has evolved into fifteen unique national systems, shaped by economic, cultural, and political forces, both national and global (Johnstone and Bain 2002). International agencies such as the World Bank and the OECD have lobbied for a set of policies associated with the Washington Consensus (Neave, G. R. & van Vught, 1991). The Bologna Process has created isomorphic pressures, supported by EU policies and funding. Many post-Soviet States have responded to these influences, albeit with different motivations and unclear outcomes (Tomusk, 2011). Comparative research on these developments, however, is scarce and has primarily discussed them in terms of decentralization, marketization and institutional autonomy (Heyneman 2010; Silova, 2011).

This PhD thesis aims to

1) reconstruct the developments of governance of higher education systems,
2) analyze to what degree the developments represent a convergence towards a "global model" or a "Post-Soviet model" and
3) formulate hypotheses about driving forces and path dependencies at national, regional and global level which have driven or impeded these changes.

Following work by Becher & Kogan (1992), Clark (1983), Jongbloed (2003), Paradeise (2009); Hood (2004); Dill (2010) and Dobbins et al. (2011), the research analyzes the object of analysis, the governance of higher education systems, on five dimensions: *1. Educational Standards, quality assessment, and information provision; 2. Regulation of admissions to higher education; 3. Institutional structures, decision-making, and autonomy; 4. Higher education financing and incentive structures; and 5. The relationship of higher education and the state*. Explanatory approaches draw upon perspectives of path dependence and models of institutional change drawing on work by North (1990), Steinmo (1992), Weick (1976), Pierson (2000) and Witte (2006).

Three post-Soviet, non-EU, Bologna signatory states were selected to represent a diverse geographical sub-sample of the 15 post-Soviet States. The three countries studied in-depth are Russia, Moldova and Kazakhstan. The period of analysis comprises the changes taking place over a 25-year period between 1991 and 2015.

Methodologically, the study rests on extensive literature analysis of previous academic publications, reports by international organizations such as the World Bank, OECD, and the EU, and national strategy papers. Building on this document analysis, over 60 semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with representatives of State organizations, HEIs and other stakeholder groups engaged in the governance of higher education. The outcomes of interviews were used to situate developments in the particular

social-political and societal contexts and to triangulate policy documents with various stakeholder perspectives, in order to reconstruct how and why specific policy changes came about, were implemented or abandoned.

The results show a differentiated picture: The governance instruments promoted by OECD, WB and EU are clearly recognizable in the 2015 governance arrangements in all three case countries. On this instruments-level "surface", a process of convergence towards the "global model" is clearly taking place. While these new instruments are being adopted, however, the specific national governance arrangements persist and continue to matter. Only in isolated instances are old instruments fully displaced. More commonly, new structures are added as additional layers to existing governance arrangements.

The three countries continue to share a number of unique characteristics which sets them apart from the Anglo-Saxon higher education systems, which have inspired the "global model". The dominating controlling role of the state has remained in place in all countries. This is strongly reinforced by national-level institutions and mental models which affirm hierarchy as the legitimate principle in governance and a lack of trust between actors in the system. In all case countries, the mutual expectation of state and HEIs alike remains that the state *should* be steering the higher education sector. This it does (Russia and Kazakhstan) or attempts to do (Moldova). Clearly, the adoption of governance instruments which are inspired by the "global model" does in no way equate with a retreat of the state. While the elements of university autonomy and stakeholder governance are slowly expanded, even this very process of loosening the reigns of the state is in great measure overseen and steered by the state. Shared characteristics, such as centralized control over admission; a state claim to steer and, in many cases, control the system; a hierarchical, authoritarian, personalized style of governance, management, leadership, as well as accountability form the discernable core of a common "post-Soviet" model of HE governance. The shared institutional past of the Soviet era, as well as common challenges, have facilitated and maintained these commonalities.

As time passes, however, these post-Soviet commonalities are getting weaker. Divergent national-level forces and actors are driving or impeding reforms: While in Moldova, political volatility and underfunding have repeatedly undermined substantial reforms, Russia and Kazakhstan have each adopted governance and management practices from New Public Management in new idiosyncratic ways: Kazakhstan has embarked on an authoritarian-driven decentralization program. Russia has created a two-tier system of state steering through financial incentivization and evaluation on the one hand, and tight oversight, control and intervention on the other. This dissertation sheds light on the developments, driving forces and mechanisms behind the convergence and divergence of approaches to higher education governance in an under-studied region of the world.

2 Introduction

2.1 Research Topic

The Higher Education System of the Soviet Union was associated with major achievements such as near-universal literacy, the first artificial satellite and the first human spaceflight, and it became the blueprint for the entire socialist world. Becoming a new model of a higher education system in its own right, since the 1920ies, it had mostly departed from a system of Humboldtian-inspired universities. Instead, it had been transformed into a large-scale network of higher educational institutions (HEIs) promoting the ideologization agenda of establishing hegemony of party Marxism over rival factions, and supporting the industrialization of the Soviet Union through forced integration of HE and industry**.** Burton Clark described the governance of the Soviet HE system as *"the purest case of the triumph of the state over oligarchical and market interaction"* (Clark, B. R., 1983, p. 142). When the Soviet Union collapsed, the 15 successor states were faced with a "triple transition" (Offe & Adler, 1991), as they had to simultaneously cope with democratization, establishing a market economy, and state- and nation-building. At the same time as demand for higher education exploded, state funding for higher education was abruptly cut. During the early years of independence, the previously state-focused system struggled for survival its place in the new political economies. This had tremendous effects on the governance of the system.

This collapse of the old higher education system of the Soviet Union coincided with a world-wide wave of public sector governance reforms often summarized under the title "new public management" (NPM). These reforms pushed for the use of market mechanisms in steering, greater institutional autonomy, quality assurance and accountability in the provision of public services, including higher education, and were promoted worldwide by international organizations such as the World Bank or the OECD. In many post-Soviet countries, these reform blueprints provided justifications for policy decisions in many areas of public policy, including higher education governance. During the 2000ies, the EU and the Bologna Process became an additional important external factor shaping the development of the governance of higher education systems.

Even though many different factors influence the development of policies, governance arrangements and HEIs, these models coming from outside are not either adopted or ignored. HEIs as well as the governance arrangements in which they are embedded are historical, time-dependent systems strongly shaped by their national and organizational histories (Krücken, Kosmützky, & Torka, 2007). Silova and Steiner-Khamsi state that "*how the reforms of the 1990s and the new millennium interacted with institutions and practices that had been in place is an important question" (2008)*, yet it is one that has not been systematically and comparatively studied in scholarly literature. The changes in higher education

governance in countries of the former Soviet Union have received comparatively little scholarly attention aside from a few authors[1] who focused on explaining changes in terms of culture, decentralization, marketization and institutional autonomy.

After 25 years of transformations of higher education systems in post-Soviet countries, the single Soviet model of higher education has evolved into fifteen unique national systems, shaped by economic, cultural, and political forces, both national and global (Johnstone and Bain 2002). The question of this dissertation thus revolves around how the same set of policy blueprints have interacted with and influenced the approaches to the governance of higher education in different countries within a shared historical, political and – to a certain degree – cultural and linguistic area: the countries of the former Soviet Union.

2.2 Starting point and personal research interest

The governance of higher education systems is an interesting and highly relevant issue that has gained in prominence on the higher education policy agenda. In many European countries this is in no small measure related to the inclusion of quality assurance in the Bologna Process. Starting from being a student representative at the University of Freiburg, a staff member at the quality assurance department, a trainer and student reviewer in Germany's student QA experts pool and, since 2011, a researcher, Consultant and Trainer at CHE Consult, I had ample opportunity to gain first-hand, as well as research and consulting exposure to the work of internal quality assurance and university governance, external quality assurance through accreditations and audits. My own research for the *Input Study to the Report from the European Commission on Progress in the Development of Quality Assurance Systems in the various Member States and on Cooperation Activities at European Level* (Bischof, Gajowniczek, Maikämper, & Aerden, 2014) provided a broad macro-perspective on EU Member States within the EHEA.

Since 2009, I had begun to learn Russian out of personal interest. In 2011, I had the opportunity join a TEMPUS project aimed at the development of a new quality assurance system for the Republic of Moldova[2]. I could not help but notice that, even though quality assurance is widely regarded as "*one of the most successful action lines of the Bologna Process*" and has gained greater prominence and specificity in each subsequent ministerial communiqué (Bischof et al., 2014), research on the post-Soviet Bologna-signatory states was notably scarce and often piecemeal. The first comprehensive comparative research project on changes in higher education systems across the post-Soviet space was launched only 2014 by the Institute of Education of the Higher School of Economics in Moscow (Huisman, Smolentseva, & Froumin, 2018). Together with a Moldovan colleague, I contributed a chapter on the developments in the higher education system of the Republic of Moldova (Bischof & Tofan, 2018).

[1] Examples include Voldemar, Tomusk; Stephen Heyneman and Iveta Silova.
[2] 530537-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-DETEMPUS-SMGR

Therefore, when the time came to choose my PhD topic in 2014, I decided to try to make my own contribution to filling this gap and dedicate my PhD to a comparative study of the governance of quality assurance. Soon after delving deeper into the intricacies in which quality is assured in post-Soviet HEIs, however, I came to the realization that a narrow study of the use of standards, assessment and information provision (Dill, 2010) de-coupled from questions of HEI autonomy, HEI financing and the regulation of access to higher education, does not provide a meaningful picture. Therefore, half-way through the dissertation, I expanded the scope to also address these aspects in order to do justice to understanding the wider context of system governance.

Inspired by Johanna Witte's (2006) comparative study of the implementation of the Bologna Process in Germany, the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom, I was interested to see how historically inherited contexts—structural, political, cultural—of the post-Soviet HE systems interact with motives and interests of actors within these systems to shape the particular development trajectories that different countries.

My initial research questions can therefore be formulated as follows:

RQ 1. How has the governance of higher education systems changed between 1991 and 2015?
RQ 2. ***Is there a convergence towards a "global model" of higher education governance?***
RQ 3. ***Is there a common model of governance of higher education post-Soviet countries?***
RQ 4. ***What was the relative influence of national, regional and global factors on the development of the governance of higher education?***

Table 1: Research Questions

2.3 Research approach

Methodologically, by analyzing the changes in instruments and actors of governance of higher education systems in multiple country cases this dissertation uses an embedded, multiple-case comparative design (Yin, 2003). The international comparative case studies cover the changes in governance approaches, instruments and actor relations in the HE systems of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova in the historic period between 1991 and 2015. The focus of the case studies is on *system*-level governance arrangements between governments, other stakeholders, and HEIs. *Intra-HEI*-governance arrangements are relevant only to the degree that they are defined by the system level.

To compare and analyze the changing governance arrangements, I have relied on an extensive analysis of previous academic publications, reports by international organizations such as the World Bank, the OECD, and the EU, as well as of national strategy papers. Furthermore, over 60 semi-structured expert interviews were conducted with representatives of state organizations, HEIs, and other stakeholder groups that are engaged in the governance of higher education. The outcomes of interviews were used to situate developments in the particular social-political and societal contexts, and to triangulate the

contents of policy documents with various stakeholder perspectives, in order to reconstruct *how* and *why* certain policy changes came about, were implemented, or had been abandoned.

This study maps and analyzes the *nature* and *degree* of changes in governance arrangements *within* and *across* systems. It also investigates to what extent adaptations of national governance arrangements represent a convergence towards a "global model" or "post-Soviet" model, based on identified commonalities.

Lastly, this study attempts to analyze how inherited governance arrangements embedded in the institutional context of the respective HE systems are changed by *global*, *regional* and *national* actors in the process of national HE policy formulation. To achieve a degree of comparability, five dimensions of the governance arrangements in HE systems receive particular attention: 1. Educational Standards, quality assessment, and information provision (quality assurance); 2. Regulation of admissions to higher education; 3. Institutional structures, decision-making and autonomy; 4. Higher education financing and incentive structures; and the relationship of HEIs and the state.

The theoretical choices and key concepts employed in this dissertation will be explained in chapters 2 and 3 and the resulting framework of analysis and methodological approach in chapter 4.

2.4 Relevance to research and practice

This study seeks to contribute to research and practice in three ways:

1) by making a relevant contribution to comparative HE research empirically by providing a detailed account of changes and developments in governance in three post-Soviet countries;
2) by contributing to a theoretical grasp of policy making in the post-Soviet region; and
3) by improving the knowledge base for the further development of a European HE area.

2.5 Structure

The structure of the study is as follows: In chapter 2, I provide an overview of the empirical and conceptual context of the governance of post-Soviet Higher Education Systems. In chapter 3, I will explain the analytical choices on the way towards a theoretical framework for the study. In chapter 4, I will outline the methodological approach. The remainder of the study is devoted to an empirical investigation of the changes of HE system governance. In chapters 5 I describe the governance of the Soviet HE system. Chapters 6-8 are dedicated to the national cases, i.e., Russia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova respectively. An international comparative analysis of the country-specific results is undertaken in chapter 9 along with a review of the research questions. I conclude the thesis with reflections on the contribution of this study for research and practice, avenues for further research, and policy implications in chapter 10.

3 Steps towards a framework of analysis

3.1 The Governance of Higher Education Systems

In this chapter, I will develop a framework of analysis to study the governance of higher education systems in the post-Soviet space. I will begin by delineating the properties of *higher education systems, higher education institutions* and actors typically engaged in the governance of higher education systems. The second sub-chapter will provide an overview of higher education system *governance,* discussing authority distribution, and the processes and structures which are relevant in the process of governance of higher education systems. In the third sub-chapter, we will turn to the *instruments* through which higher education systems are steered. In particular, I will present and discuss the dimensions of higher education system governance which I will use for the purpose of comparative analysis, namely *1. Quality Assurance (Educational Standards, quality assessment, and information provision); 2. Regulation of admissions to higher education; 3. Institutional structures, decision-making and autonomy; 4. Higher education financing and incentive structures.*

3.1.1 Higher Education systems

3.1.1.1 Higher education systems

In his classic comparative study of national systems of higher education, Clark (1983) describes higher education systems in a narrow sense as "a set of formal institutions" or – in a broader sense – as all institutions comprising "everyone whose work is in one way or another connected to higher education, including inspectors, organizers, workers and consumers". National higher education systems can be defined as the historically, politically and culturally contingent institutions that organize science and learning in a national context (David-Fox, M. & Peters, 2008). The conceptualization of higher education as a *system* is a core theoretical perspective in the body of knowledge on higher education. Studies of national higher education systems therefore typically follow the definition of higher education systems as encompassing all institutions of higher education as well as the set of elements for managing this whole (e.g., Ministries of Education and Science) (Kuzminov, Semenov, & Froumin, 2015).

Studies of higher education systems have concerned themselves with trying to develop models through different approaches: By identifying *levels* of systems; by describing different *roles of actors* within the system; by bringing to light *values, norms and beliefs* defining the rules of the system; or by modelling the *operations* taking place within the system as well as the *interplay* between all of these dimensions. Differences between HE systems began to be analyzed regarding *access*, with Trow (1973) describing a continuum from *elite*, *mass*, and *universal* access. Since the 1900ies, there have been strong pushes to analyze HE systems and HEIs according to their (research) productivity, with university ratings and

league tables occupying a central position in policy discourses in many countries. Lastly, and most relevantly for this book, higher education research has concerned itself with governance and control (Clark, B. R., 1983) and institutional autonomy (Neave, G., 1986) of higher education systems. I will summarize some key characteristics of higher education systems for their governance.

Sectors and tiers

National higher education systems vary in the number of their sectors (from single, public systems with only a single institutional type to private and public systems with a highly differentiated system of different types of HEIs). Systems are further vertically differentiated by tiers within HEIs (from single-tier systems culminating in on qualification such as the old German *Diplom* to multi-tier systems differentiating between BA, MA, and PhD levels with separate organizational structures within the same institution). Between HEIs, higher education systems are differentiated vertically by hierarchies based on *sequence* (such as the succession from community college to research university) and institutional *prestige*. As Clark notes: "*Whatever the combination of sections and tiers within institutions, and sectors and hierarchies among them, the prevailing structure sets many of the problems of control and conditions all important issues of continuity and reform"*.

Organizational levels of higher education systems

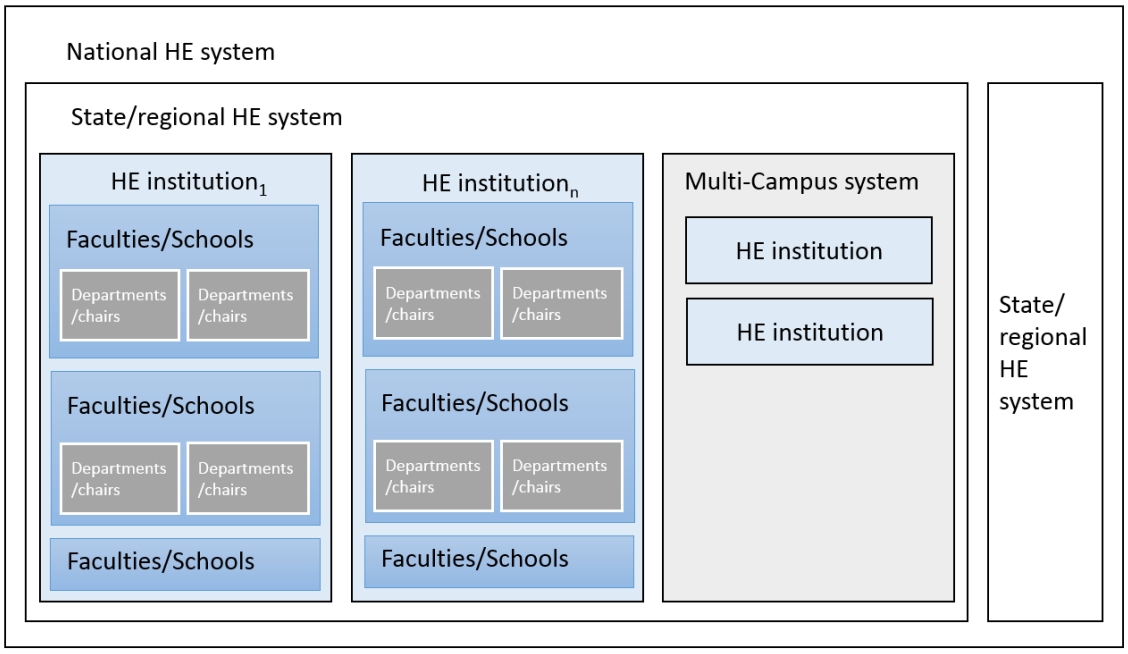

Figure 1: Organizational levels of higher education systems

As Figure 1 illustrates, higher education systems can be of varying organizational complexity. Starting from the smallest units, individual teachers and researchers do their work in departments or chairs, often organized by sub-disciplines (e.g. for "social psychology" or "zoology") in either chairs (in the German HE tradition) or departments (in the Anglo-Saxon HE tradition). Departments and chairs, in turn, are typically organized by similar disciplines into schools (e.g. "school of psychology") or faculties (e.g. "faculty of life sciences") which operate under the umbrella and within the structures of higher education institutes, such as Universities, *Fachhochschulen* or other forms of institutions. Adding a further organizational layer, in some higher education systems, there are multi-campus systems which themselves represent umbrella organizations for several semi-independent HEIs. Noteworthy examples are the *University of California (UC) system* in the United States or the *Duale Hochschule Baden-Württemberg (DHBW)* in Germany. Lastly, all HEIs within the same political, financial or regulatory framework form the entirety of a higher education system, either at the state/regional or national level.

3.1.1.2 Higher Education Institutions as institutions and organizations

As many ideals as there are concerning the *raison d'être* of higher education institutions, as many concepts are there concerning the way they should function, how they should be organized, who should play which role in their governance, by whom they should by financed and to whom they should be accountable.

Universities can be conceptualized as *organizations*, which have an specific organizational identity and goals, which they try to realize as effectively or efficiently as possible, through the use of resources and

a certain internal organization. Scholars of higher education have put forward different models and theoretical ideas about what kind of an organization universities are, including the ideals of a *bureaucracy* (Stroup, 1966), *a community of scholars* (Goodman, 1962) or a *political system* (Baldridge, 1971). Universities can also, however, be understood as *institutions*, representing *"relatively enduring collections of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances*" (Olsen, 2007). As institutions are embedded in the identities of their participants, they justify and legitimize certain behaviors, while restricting others (March & Olsen, 1989). Many authors have argued that in the course of the NPM-related reforms (see chapter 3.2.2.4), universities are currently being transformed from institutions into more "complete organizations" (Kehm, B. M., 2012; Wilkesmann & Schmid, 2012).

Whether higher education institutions (HEIs) are understood as organizations delivering certain services or as more enduring institutions has a tremendous impact on how governments approach higher education policy. While a detailed study of the ideological conception of the universities in the post-Soviet space is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the following distinctions should help to highlight the specificities and changes of governance within the post-Soviet context.

3.1.1.3 Actors engaged in the governance of higher education systems

Many different actors are engaged in the governance of higher education systems forming an complex and interdependent network influencing HEIs, but also interacting with it (Dill, 2011). Pressure to adopt certain policies on HEI autonomy, quality assurance, and financing is exerted by international organizations such as the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank or the EU, as well as by various professional and managerial groups which have given these issues a powerful presence in the international higher education policy discourse (Singh, 2010). Figure 6 provides an incomplete overview of international and national actors who are engaged in policy-setting and direct and indirect governance of higher education in Europe.

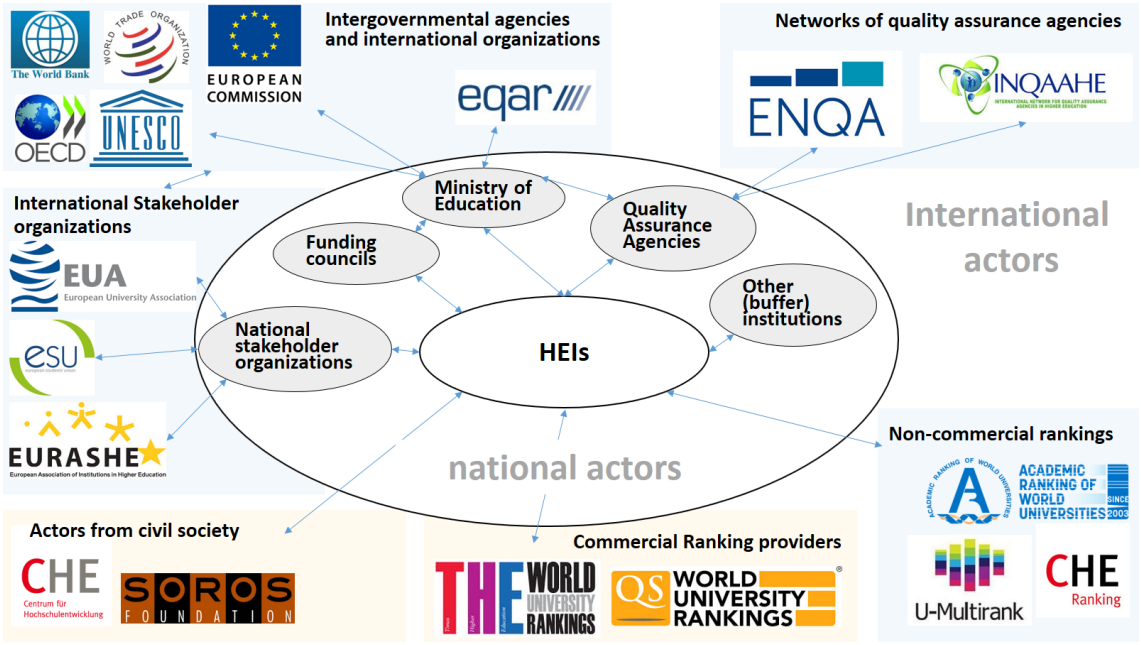

Figure 2: An incomplete overview of national and international actors in the governance of higher education in Europe

In this section, I will briefly portray these actors without delving too deeply into the various ways in which they interact in practice.

Ministries responsible for higher education

Ministries responsible for higher education have the responsibility to formulate and implement the higher education policies as mandated by their national parliaments and governments. They almost always play an important role in regulation, oversight and/or funding arrangements, either directly or indirectly (e.g. via delegation of powers to buffer institutions such as funding councils or quality assurance agencies.

Buffer institutions (e.g. quality assurance or funding agencies)

In accordance with Temple & Billing (2003) intermediary (buffer) institutions are defined as "*structures formally established, through due process, to carry out a regulatory or allocatory function in relation to all institutions of higher education, or a specified class of them, in the country concerned, on behalf of the government or the legislature*." In the context of governance of the higher education system, Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) represent prominent examples of such buffer institutions, provided that there are granted some form of legal recognition and their decisions are linked to regulatory or financial consequences for the HEIs they review.

There is a large degree of variation in the way buffer institutions such as quality assurance agencies operate: In some countries, they enjoy a high degree of autonomy to define the scope and type of their activities, while in others their activities and procedures are specified in great detail by their pertinent legislation. Other differences include the focus of quality assurance (on institutions or programs, or both), whether or not the QA agency is invested with the power to grant permission for institutions or

programs to operate as well as the degree of influence a government reserves (Bischof et al., 2014). Other notable buffer institutions are higher education funding councils (HEFC) which are entrusted with allocating funding to HEIs. As such, they play a central and powerful role in the regulation of the HE sector. Barbara Romzek (2000) proposes a classification these relationships between a government and (subsidiary) public agencies into *hierarchical, professional, legal, and political* according to their degree of autonomy and the source of expectations and/or control by the government.

National and international stakeholder organizations

In many countries, HEIs, student unions, employers and even QAAs have formed organizations to represent them and their interests. For HEIs, these organizations are most often known as rectors' conferences or councils. While usually not having any formal powers, they are often consulted about developments pertaining to them and make their voice heard to lobby for policies benefiting them.

In many regions of the world, national stakeholder organizations have founded international umbrella organizations to coordinate and represent their interests. In Europe, all the major national stakeholder organizations have their correspondence at the European level. Noteworthy examples include the European Universities Association (EUA), the European Students Union (ESU), the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) representing non-university HEIs. International stakeholder organizations have played an important role in developing the "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)" (ENQA, 2005a), the "Guidelines of Good Practice in Quality Assurance" (INQAAHE, 2007) and organizing pan-European platforms such as the "European Quality Assurance Forum" (EQAF).

National consultative bodies and think tanks

Many governments maintain national consultative bodies to advise them on their higher education policies. An example of such an institution is the German *Wissenschaftsrat* which regularly conducts studies into aspects of the higher education system and makes policy recommendations.

Intergovernmental agencies and international organizations

Intergovernmental agencies which take an interest in the governance of higher education systems include the European Commission (EC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO). While these actors do not have a formal role in the day-to-day "business" of the governance of HE systems, they are influential in shaping regulation and policy by formulating recommendations or financing projects (Dill, 2011).

The *European Commission* has become an important actor and indeed one of the main driving forces in the Bologna Process and in the development of the European QA architecture (Balzer & Rusconi, 2007). In spite of not having formal authority in the area of education, the EC became interested in QA already

in the early 1990ies because of its potential for driven harmonization and internationalization of the various HE systems (Westerheijden, D. F., 2005) and early-on financed a number of pilot projects in this area (Management Group, 1995; van Vught, F. A. & Westerheijden, 1993). The EC was first in articulating several of the Bologna Process' action lines, provides financial support for related activities and also funded the independent evaluation of the process (Westerheijden, D. F. & et al., 2010b). Through its project funding, the EC has been the driving force behind large number of projects. It is noteworthy that the stakeholder organizations gain a substantial amount of funding from the European Commission, either directly (e.g. in the case of ESU in form of an operating grant) or indirectly via the financing of their projects.

The *OECD* is focusing on providing studies, comparative measures and raw data on educational performance which is creating considerable pressure for reforms on the thus-assessed countries (Martens, 2007). The *World Bank* produces policy reports, provides grants and loans for projects as well as technical support to improve governance structures in higher education (Salmi, J., Hopper, & Bassett, 2009). By formulating recommendations, guidelines and standards on quality assurance, *UNESCO* and the *WTO* have "played the role of global standardizers" for academic quality assurance (King, 2010).

A particular case of an international organization indirectly influencing the governance of HE systems is the *European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)*, which was created by European governments to lists quality assurance agencies which have undergone an evaluation to prove to substantially comply with the ESG.

Associations and not-for-profit organizations

Institutions of civil society include voluntary and professional organizations engaged in academic quality assurance activities such as the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE) and the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET); or organizational such as the SOROS foundation which are privately funded and pursue the civil-society agendas of their founders.

3.1.2 Governance in higher education

Governance is a highly contested concept that concerns the exercise of collective control towards common goals (Middlehurst & Teixeira, 2012). Its particular definitions vary with the disciplinary background, the object of governance and which of its aspects researchers chose to study. Nevertheless, the term governance has become almost ubiquitous in both academic discourse as well as administrative practice when discussing how the public sector and other institutions manage themselves, their relationships with the broader society, and how they are steered by actors in the broader society (Peters, 2014). Depending on context, the term "governance" is sometimes used interchangeably with "control" (Hood, 2004, p. 4), "regulation" (Blackmur, 2007; Jackson, 1997) or "steering" (Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2009).

Mayntz (1998) observes that the term governance is typically used in one of three meanings. In one meaning, it relates to a mode of governing, distinct from hierarchical control and characterized by co-operation of state and non-state actors (different *stakeholders*[3]), which are engaged and coordinated in network structures of public and private institutions. A second meaning of the term governance is more general and encompasses all different modes of coordinating individual actions, or basic forms of social order. At the highest level, "governance" refers to the processes of policy-making and agenda-setting. In this perspective, as described by Peters (2014), at its core, governance involves firstly a process by which goals for society are set, implying that the many individual goals of relevant societal actors are made somewhat compatible with one another in this process. Secondly, it contains the process of finding and directing the means – money, organizations, people – by which to carry out the selected strategy. In a final step, the implementation must be evaluated, formatively and summatively, both for (public) accountability as well as to learn and improve future governance activities.

The term "governance" in its broadest understanding is thus an analytical perspective interested in the forms and mechanisms of the coordination and regulation of collective issues (Benz, Lütz, Schimank, & Simonis, 2007)[4]. A definition which has taken hold in higher education is provided by Eurodyce (2008, p. 12) and refers to governance as "*the formal and informal exercise of authority under laws, policies, and rules that articulate the rights and responsibilities of various actors, including the rules by which they interac*t". Several studies on the topic have followed this definition (Boer, H. de, Enders, & Schimank, 2007; Braun & Merrien, 1999b; File & Stensaker, 2006). Following this conceptualization, governance in higher education can be seen as a structure of relationships and authority which results in organizational coherence, authorizes policies, plans and decisions, demands accountability (Gallagher, 2001).

Lastly, a meaningful distinction can be made regarding the level of the higher education system, with *internal governance* referring to the intra-institutional arrangements within universities, and *external governance* referring to the arrangements prevalent at the system level, comprising all HEIs, the legislative framework, funding mechanisms and the related supervising and steering actors such as quality assurance agencies, funding councils, ministries (Boer, H. & File, 2009).

Two complementary models have had a particularly strong influence on the study of governance of higher education systems which were used to study the distribution of authority and power in a higher education system (Clark, B. R., 1983) as well as have provided a systematization of the operational and normative functions of different level of authority within a HE system (Becher & Kogan, 1992). These which will be presented in the nextsection.

[3] Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations with an (legitimate) interest in the subject matter

[4] In this perspective, "forms" refers to the structures in which interaction among individuals, organizations, societal systems or States takes place, while "mechanisms" describe the processes which emerge as a consequence within the framework of these forms Schimank (2002, p. 155).

3.1.2.1 Authority and coordination within higher education systems - Burton Clark's triangle of coordination

In his seminal book "*The Higher Education System*", Burton Clark (1983) describes the functioning of the higher education system as the interaction and coordination of three forces: 1) The academic oligarchy, 2) state authority and 3) the market (see Figure 3). Through the forces, Clark created a model of how the relationships between different actors with differing goals, beliefs and power shape the functioning of higher education systems.

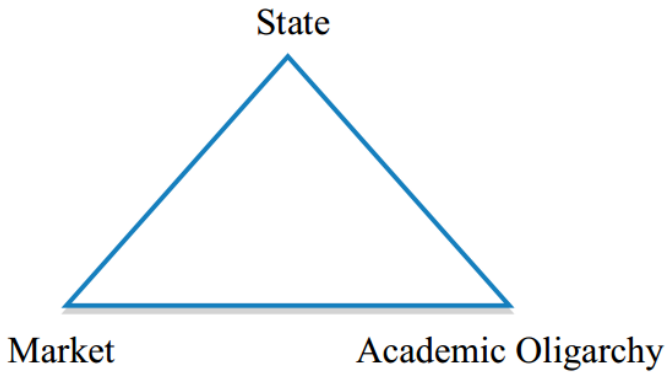

Figure 3: Clark's triangle of coordination (1983)

In Clark's model, *state authority* refers to the regulation, direct management and all other efforts by the government to steer the actions of actors in the higher education system according to its objectives. The coordination mechanism of the State is *bureaucratic coordination* and *political coordination*. *Political coordination* of higher education tends to rise and wane, depending on the centrality of the topic at any given time. During times when higher education is on the political agenda, there tends to be deeper involvement of political decision-makers, and more reporting and evaluation demands on higher education. Often, such phases result in new or changed structures of bureaucratic coordination. *Bureaucratic coordination* relies on centralized planning, planned solutions, implementation, and evaluation. It often manifests itself in the establishment of additional levels of governance such as via additional councils, supervisory boards or agencies. It can also manifest itself in *jurisdictional expansion* or *rule expansion*, with the state taking on responsibilities for previously unregulated areas or adding regulations to specify previously unregulated procedures. Such changes often go hand-in-hand with an enlarged personnel base, a professionalization of staff working in state structures and an accompanying separate culture of this new profession.

The *academic oligarchy* refers to 'groups of academic super-barons' and their power to influence decisions within the higher education system. The coordination mechanism of the academic oligarchy is *professional coordination*, which tends to be is strong wherever professional expertise is required. It is articulated through the representation of academics in decision bodies where representatives articulate

the interests of the academic oligarchy based on collegiality and academic prestige. Increases in professional coordination often are reflected in the expansion of professional representation, of disciplinary associations, or of rectors' associations in funding councils or policy-making bodies.

The *Market* refers to the degree of influence on decisions in higher education which is exerted by considerations of demand and supply. Market forces in higher education can stem from consumer markets, where student demand for study programs influences funding or prestige; in labor markets, where "academic stars" or other highly qualified staff chose institutions to work at; or institutional markets where the prestige of highly-ranked HEIs motivates others to imitate them. *Market coordination* thus exerts its influence through the aggregation of individual choices, creating situations upon which institutional leaders, the state and academic oligarchy are forced to react.

In a more abstract way, the coordination triangle of governance in higher education can be understood as the interaction of the professional/collegial authority of the academic profession, market forces and governmental or managerial steering. Clark asserts that these three forces always act in concert, with the different poles being of different strength at different times and places. Through the interaction of their different beliefs, norms, goals and activities, higher education systems in their entirety are coordinated (Jongbloed, 2003), resulting in a dynamic equilibrium of forces which shape and provide direction to academic work (Clark, B. R., 1983). In this sense, "*coordination is in a large sector is not synonymous with administrative hierarchy*" (Clark, B. R., 1983, p. 8). Indeed, Clark argues that coordination even takes place when actors in higher education systems operate entirely autonomously from one another and there are no explicit shared goals. Coordination may take the form of explicit policy-setting and planning, but can also consist of conflict, competition, or power struggles actors within a system or of actors trying to cope with intended and unintended outcomes of their (prior) actions. What is more, all three forces are needed for a high-quality HE system: *"governments […] must play an active role in higher education. They cannot achieve [their] goals solely by relying on the tools at their disposal, that is, financial appropriations and government orders, regulation, information and direct provision. They also need to rely on professional expertise, non-governmental business and civil society leaders, private initiative and market mechanisms. Thus all of the three sources of authority […] are interdependent."* (OECD, 2017)

Sources of authority in the governance of higher education systems

Nevertheless, as Clark (1983) has shown, HE system vary widely on the degree of authority actors command on the various levels of the higher education system. Authority is derived from different sources. At the level of disciplines, authority is typically based on the individual status of the chair-holders derived from their scientific and group prestige, on collegial professorial norms, the status and function in the academic community as well as on technical competence and specific expertise. At the level of the institution, in addition to the individual personal authority, authority may be derived from

the position in the institutional bureaucracy (as in the functions of rector, vice-rector, etc.) or in authority of trustees or other supervising agents. Lastly, authority at the system-level lies with the political supervisory agents such as parliament and the government, in bureaucratic overseeing agencies as well as with the organized academic oligarchy (often organized in professional organizations).

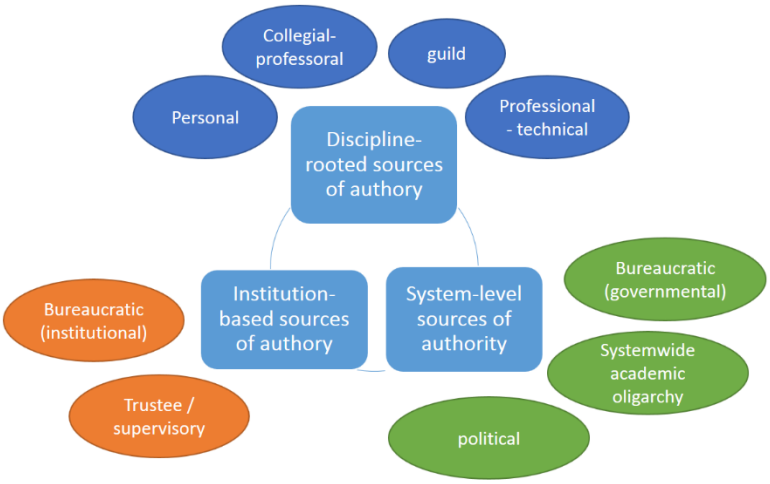

Figure 4: Sources of authority in higher education systems based on Clark (1983)

National modes of authority distribution

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the strong influence of "Clark's triangle" on higher education scholarship, has been its use as a typology for national modes of authority distribution. The modes represent prototypical cases Clark (1983) found in his comparative research in national higher education systems. While they certainly need to be taken with a grain of salt, they have influenced a large body of research and may serve to appreciate the model's applicability to new cases.

Clark (1983) distinguished three traditions of authority distribution. In a "*Continental Mode*" – Clark mentions countries like Italy, France or Germany as examples – powerful chair-holders and state ministries dominate the higher education system. In such systems, funding is often distributed directly from the State to individual professors or controlled by their representatives in funding councils, while the institutional structures and processes are determined by law. The institutional level is weak and often largely ceremonial, making the system top- and bottom-heavy, and making professional-collegial and state authority the dominant forces in its coordination. The bottom-heavy "*British Mode*" is characterized by a large degree of institutional autonomy, exercised by trustees and university grants committees which distribute the funding granted in lump sums to HEIs. This makes the professional-collegial force dominant in its coordination. The "*American Mode*" is characterized by a strong concentration of power in the hands of trustees and the institutional administration, almost no control by governments and a culture of department collegiality in which there are no chair-holders. As funding needs to be acquired more strongly through tuition fees, market coordination plays a stronger role.

Continental Mode	British Mode	American Mode
• Strong faculty guild and State bureaucracy • Concentration of power among senior professors and state ministry • Weak institutional level • Funding often bypasses institutional level	• Strong guild and trustee authority • Funding controlled by professors in university grants committee • Little power at govern-mental level	• Strong trustees and HEI administration • Department collegiality • Very little control by the government

Table 2: Traditions of authority distribution according to Clark (1983)

Clark points out that strong identities tend to develop where authority is located in the system, resulting in stronger institutional identities in the American Mode and stronger faculty or chair identities in the Continental Mode. In addition, authority tends to be diffused in bottom-heavy systems, as powerful chair-holders and faculties enjoy a larger degree of autonomy.

Criticism of Clark's triangle of coordination

Clark's triangle of coordination is considered one of, if not *the,* most influential models for analysis of governance and authority relations in research on post-secondary education and has spawned an impressive amount of follow-up research. It has been used to describe the move from state control to state supervision (Gornitzka, A. & Maassen, 2000; van Vught, Frans A., 1989), to characterize the relative power of actors in different national systems (Kogan, Bauer, Bleiklie, & Henkel, 2006), and the way marketization policy was being implemented in Dutch higher education (Jongbloed, 2003). Clark's triangle provides researchers with a simple tool to compare different higher education systems according to the relative distribution of authority among the state, market forces, and the academic oligarchy. Nevertheless, the model has its shortcomings:

Moving away from one pole of coordination within the model implies moving closer to one or two of the other poles. For example, in a situation, in which the market becomes a more dominating force, the nature of the model automatically requires that the state or the academic oligarchy lose some of their influence. In this sense, the model proposes a "zero-sum" distribution of power between the three poles (Jongbloed, 2003), which may not always be accurate. As shown by Jongbloed (2003), the state may not only allow market forces to play a greater role, but simultaneously control, encourage and facilitate these forces, thus actually exerting quite a central and powerful role. This criticism is related to an argument brought forward by Pusser (2008), who points out that the market and the academic oligarchy always depend on the State which, to a degree, always establishes the boundaries of the game as well as being an actor in it.

Another criticism is that the model cannot account for fluctuating distributions of relative power within the triangle. It is a fixed model useful for comparison between systems at any given point in time, but it cannot capture evolution, oscillation or change (Maggio, 2011).

Christine Musselin (2004) pointed out that different levels of the higher education system (e.g. the university, the department, the individual researcher) can be – and typically are – governed by different coordinating principles at the same time, which would result in different triangles for each level. Later approaches (Dobbins, Knill, & Vögtle, 2011) try to take this into account by differentiating between aspects of university governance.

3.1.2.2 Processes and Structures in the governance of Higher Education systems

In their seminal book, Becher & Kogan (1992) propose a synoptic model of higher education governance, taking into accounts *levels* (individual, basic unit, institution, central authority), *Modes* (operational & normative modes, internal & external) and *actors* in the system (individual academics; heads of depts. or schools / institutes; universities (HEIs), national ministers & ministry of education). According to the authors, on each level, actors simultaneously operate in a *normative mode* – related to the monitoring and maintenance of values – and an *operative mode*, which refers to the carrying out of their

day-to-day tasks. Each mode is further differentiated in an internal and an external aspect, which relate to dealing with norms and operations from inside and outside of the higher education system, respectively. The following table summarizes their description dimensions of higher education systems:

Level of authority	Operational functions	Normative functions
1. Central authority – National government, State (regional) government and other authorities in charge of overall planning, resource allocation & monitoring standards	Optimization of resource use, sponsorship of developments	Overseeing and maintaining standards of quality, relevance and effectiveness
2. Institution – HEI, school, faculty as defined by law (instruments of governance) and by convention (through its various decision-making bodies)	Internal maintenance of institution; forward planning; policy implementation	Maintaining academic regulations
3. Basic unit – institute, school of study, course teams, departments with academic responsibility for identifiable courses; own operating budgets; influence on recruitment of colleagues and often students	Student provision; curriculum design and research	Maintain peer group norms and values
4. individuals – teaching and research staff, administrators, ancillary workers, students)	Performance of teaching/research/service roles	Realizing role expectations and personal goals

Table 3: Levels and functions of higher education systems according to Becher & Kogan (1992)

The actors on different levels of the system, of course, interact with one another. Higher level actors continuously monitor and judge and influence the performance and outcomes of lower levels, negotiate tasks and allocate funds (see Figure 5).

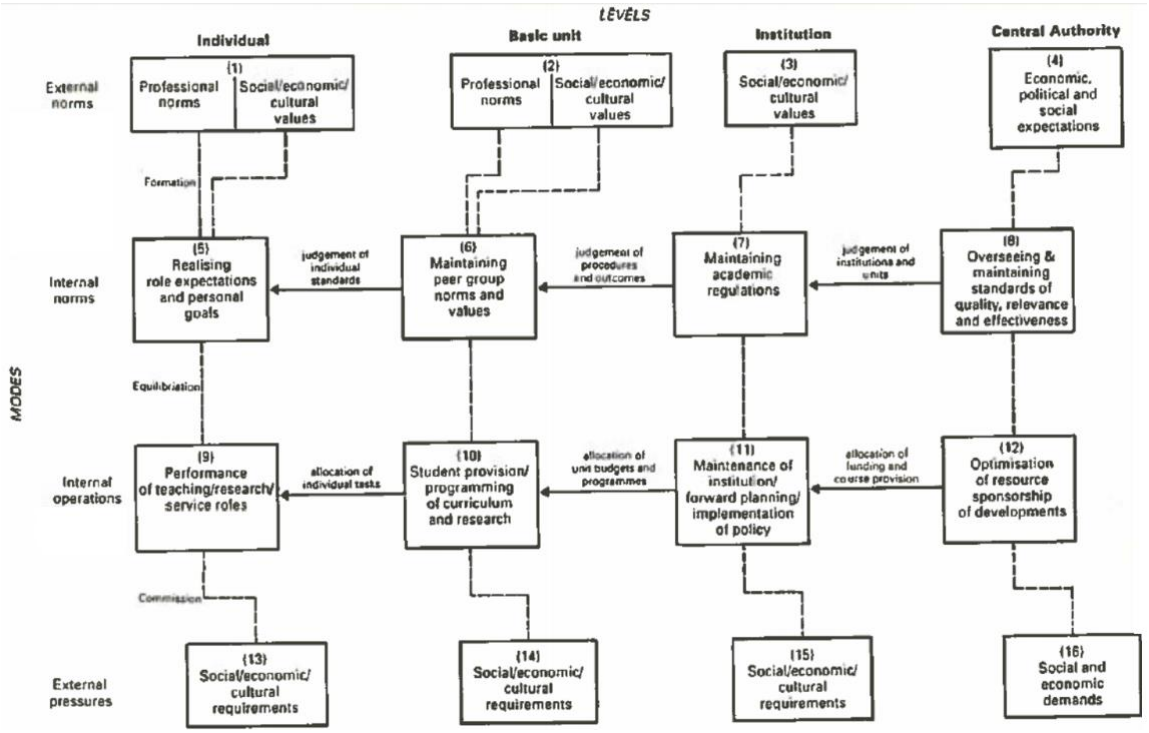

Figure 5: The synaptic model of higher education systems, from Becher & Kogan (1992, p. 18)

The model allows for the comparative description of changing relationships between the levels in terms of evaluative judgements (in the normative mode), in terms of the powers to allocate funding, study program offer, or tasks (in the operative mode), and in terms of the professional, social, economic, and cultural norms guiding these aspects.

Becher & Kogan concede that the model may oversimplify the heterogeneity found in higher education systems worldwide. The level of central authority may consist of a number of different governing authorities, boards of trustees or agencies acting in concert to fulfill the functions described in the model. Likewise, they concede, that there may – possibly even as a rule – more relationships than those between neighboring levels: central authorities may regulate in detail aspects of basic units and even individuals, just to name one example.

Lastly, Becher & Kogan stress the importance of the wider societal context for the values and norms within the higher education system. A society which highly values its HEIs and academics – because they are perceived as match societal needs and preferences – will instill greater self-esteem and self-confidence in institutions, basic units and individuals, as will the comparability of salary scales to those of professionals outside of higher education (Becher & Kogan, 1992, p. 21).

3.1.3 Summary: Making sense of higher education governance

Burton Clark and many others analyze higher education governance in terms of the relative dominance of the coordination mechanisms of the State/Hierarchy, the Market and the Academic Oligarchy. Clark pointed out that higher education systems are characterized by different distributions of power between actor groups. Becher & Kogan propose to analyze the governance of higher education by levels of authority and the respective power on each level in terms of evaluative judgements ("normative mode"), in terms of the powers to allocate funding, study program offer, or work tasks ("operative mode"), and in terms of the professional, social, economic, and cultural norms guiding these aspects. Both approaches are not mutually exclusive but represent different levels of aggregation: Without analyzing the details of distribution of authority at various levels of the higher education system, it is hardly possible to identify among which actor power is concentrated. Most researchers also maintain that the higher education sector must therefore always be governed in some form of network-like governance structure, as, in the case of HE, "*we are not dealing with a hierarchical system, where change can be decreed from above but rather with a negotiable one in which individuals, basic units and institutions regard themselves as having the right to decide what is best for them*" (Becher & Kogan, 1992; Witte, 2006). The combination of both models and angles of analysis makes is clear that higher education systems contain multiple levels, involve a large number of different stakeholders and can therefore most adequately characterized as systems of multi-level and multi-actor governance (Witte, 2006, p. 28).

In order to make statements about convergence or divergence, a framework of analysis needs to be defined that is both specific enough to make substantial statements as well as feasible to work with. The next chapter will describe trends in the governance of governance of higher education systems and will work out the dimensions of change which can adequately describe the changes taken place in post-Soviet countries.

3.2 The changing governance of higher education systems

After having discussed the concept of governance of higher education systems, in the previous chapter, I will now turn to the trends and forces shaping changes in the governance of higher education systems. In the first sub-chapter, I will begin by reviewing *global* trends and forces which have been identified in the literature as shaping higher education systems around the world and will develop describe elements of the "global model" of higher education governance. In the second sub-chapter, I will review European Integration, the Bologna Process, and their promotion of quality assurance as a *regional* force exerting influence on the post-Soviet Bologna signatory countries.

3.2.1 Conceptualizing forces of change in the governance of higher education systems: The 'Glonacal' agency heuristic

With few exceptions, a shortcoming of most studies on policy change is that they fail to reconstruct *how* the changes comes about, which interest groups and the political entrepreneurs bring it to the agenda and lobby for it, how problems are identified, are framed as such, how solutions are developed, and which narratives are used in their justification (Witte, 2006). "*In brief, [studies on policy change in higher education] rarely address the wider political economy of HE 'reforming'*" (Ferlie et al., 2009, p. 6). This is particularly true in the case of cross-national transfer of ideas. The present study intends to analyze the impact of global influences (particularly the Global Model of HE governance and the Bologna Process) on the development of governance structures in national HE systems in post-Soviet countries. Since national HE systems usually have a high degree of basic diversity (Meek, V. Lynn, 1996), various patterns of convergence can be expected, regardless of how strong the efforts of government are to impose systems and regulations (Clark, B. R., 1996). This is why information about path dependencies (such as different types of HE, former governance systems, earlier reforms, the macrosystem) as well as a model of the forces driving and resisting change needs to be taken into account for the development of the analytical framework.

In one of the most highly cited articles in the field of higher education research, Marginson and Rhoades (2002) criticized that most comparative research on higher education systems focusses on nation-states, national markets, and national systems of higher education without appropriately theorizing the effect of global forces on national systems. In an ever-closer connected world, the authors argue, national developments cannot be studied in isolation. Global economic, cultural, and educational forces act on governments and HEIs. Likewise, the political, economic, and educational contours of countries, regions and continents are being reshaped by regional trading blocs such as the EU which are driving higher education systems to become more similar across national boundaries. National or even local actors, in turn, can and do also become actors influencing the global, national and local field. Nation states and movements within them to preserve and promote local cultural identity and practices can resist the isomorphic pressures and develop their own attraction for others. Higher education is thus shaped by three

dimensions simultaneously: the global, the national and the local (thus the term *glonacal* = global + national + local). In order to better understand the complex synchronous communications and networked social relations taking place in an open information environment characterized by intensifying cross-border flow, they propose a "*glonacal agency"* paradigm to study agency on the global, regional, national, and local levels, with the purpose to trace the complex reciprocal interactions of actors across levels and domains.

Under the term "*agency*,", the authors understand any polities, entities or organizations, at any level, which are able to individually or collectively take action. This includes international organizations such as the World Bank with a global sphere of activity, regional entities such as the European Union, national entities such as Ministries of Education or national legislatures, as well as local entities such as universities or other organizations. They also point out that organizations at any level – global, national, and local – can shape international, national or local policy and practice: The European Universities Association (EUA) which lobbies the both the European Union as well as national governments and also conducts projects with individual universities. National groups such as rectors' unions or business associations and sometimes even local bodies such as university senates can endeavor to collectively shape policies and practices. The authors stress that no group or any level unilaterally determines other levels. Their interaction is rather characterized by the myriad of intersections, interactions, and mutual determinations on and between the different levels.

Naturally, *agencies* differ vastly on many dimensions. Their activities and influence have different geographical and functional scopes (*spheres*). They are marked by differences in the *degree of reciprocity of influence* they exert on others, the relative *strength of influences* (how direct or indirect the influence is and how many resources are available to exert the influence), and the historical embeddedness of the structures on they are exerting influence (*Layers and conditions).*

As one example the authors provide, the World Bank has a global scope of activities (*sphere*). It is actively influencing national policies about access and tuition via its structural adjustment policies, it performance-based measures, institutional independence, managerial flexibility and market-like behavior of HEIs. The strength of its influence, especially over the developing world, is related to its reputation and its ability to issue grants and loans (*strength of influence*). This influence is considerably less vis-à-vis richer OECD countries. It exerts its influence mostly on the national level in which it engages with governments and policy-makers. The success of its policy recommendations depends not in small part on the degree to which the necessary preconditions exist (e.g. sufficient private wealth for cost sharing of higher education financing or managerial skills and capacity for greater university autonomy) and the degree to which they are compatible with the local culture and traditions (e.g. small peripheral higher education systems are more likely to take up recommendations than large ones with their own pronounced traditions (*Layers and conditions).* Looking at the opposite direction of influence, the policies

of the World Bank are much less likely to be significantly influenced by economically little-developed, politically weak countries as they are by powerful and prestigious nation states and agencies.

Within the glonacal framework of analysis in mind, I next provide an overview of global and regional (e.g. European) trends that can reasonably be expected to exert influence on the development of governance arrangements within post-Soviet countries (as they have in other contexts). It is important to stress, however, the limits in explanatory power of such an approach: Firstly, it is only with considerable difficulty that influences, driving forces and factors stabilizing the status quo can be clearly discerned in any historical processes. The results of any attempt to do so will thus inevitably be limited by an observer's subjective perspective, the necessarily incomplete information he draws his conclusions on, and inevitable subjectivity of this data itself. Accepting the ultimate futility of the endeavor, it may nevertheless be illuminating to try to discern the factors which have led to the different developments in the three studies studied in this dissertation, if only as a device to create new questions for future research to investigate more in-depth.

3.2.2 Global trends and the emergence of a "global model" of higher education governance

As the OECD observes, rising global competition, the advent and spread of information technology, the increased sophistication and knowledge-dependency of developed economies, ever-increasing demand for access and the impact of mass participation in the face of limited public budgets have increased the demand for broader, more efficient and more effective higher education worldwide (OECD, 2010, p. 18). In this chapter I will outline these changes which have contributed to the emergence of a "global model" of higher education governance.

3.2.2.1 Massification of higher education

A major factor for the changing governance of higher education systems is the growing world-wide demand for higher education (Dill, 2010; Trow, 2007). Higher Education is increasingly seen as crucial to economical and civil development worldwide (World Bank, 2002, p. 7). With increasing globalization, knowledge seems to have become the core of a country's competitive advantage, much more so than natural resources or cheap labor (Porter, 1998). This has led to a strong demand for increased access to higher education which, in turn, has led to an unprecedented expansion and massification of higher education systems at a scale never seen before. Within a generation, higher education systems were transformed from being the preserve of a small elite group to serving large strata of the population. This massification of higher education access had a number of impacts on individual HEIs and as well as higher education systems in their entirety.

In many countries, the initial response to the increasing need for a highly qualified work force has been the *creation of new HEIs* to cater to the growing number of students as well as *greatly expanding the number of students* admitted into existing HEIs. In addition, in many countries, new forms of HEIs such as *Fachhochschulen, Hogeschoolen,* open universities and polytechnics were formed to serve students with increasingly diverse backgrounds and career motivations. The numbers reflect these changes: Out of the 1,854 universities founded between 1200 and 1985, three quarters were established since 1900, with 1,101 (59%) having been founded between 1950 and 1985 (Ramirez & Riddle, 1991; Scott, 1998). Student participation in HE virtually exploded, both in gross numbers as well as in the percentage of the overall population (see Figure 6).

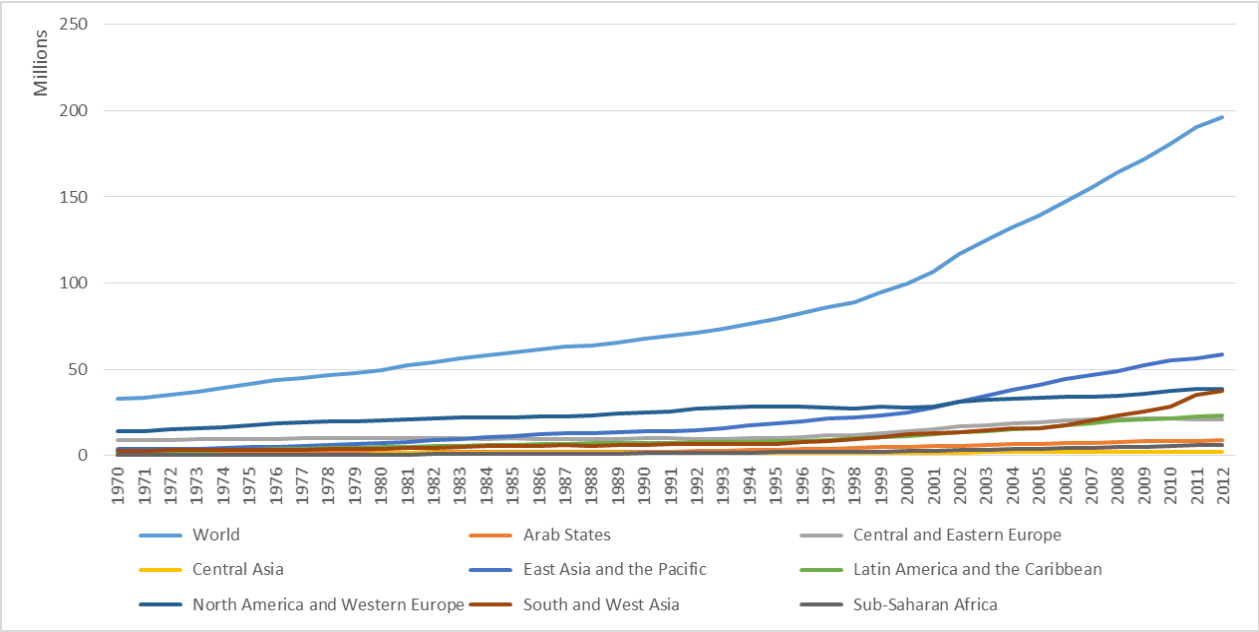

Figure 6: Gross enrollment of students in tertiary education by region, in millions, UNESCO 2014

3.2.2.2 Marketization in Higher Education

The growing demand for higher education led to an increasing strain on governmental and public sector budgets, from which the majority of institutions were founded. Starting in the 1980s in the UK and the US, a shift away from state funding, regulation and oversight towards to using the market as a means of ensuring public purposes took place (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2010, p. 32). In line with the "*Washington Consensus"*[5], the neo-liberal pattern was to reduce state subsidization of higher education, shift costs to "the market" and consumers, and demand greater accountability for performance (Neave, G. R. & van Vught, 1991). This manifested itself in a shift of costs to consumers, organizational reforms, enhanced institutional autonomy, a new forms of accountability and quality assurance for HEIs.

Shift of costs to consumers

A key argument brought forward by proponents of these reforms, such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and the OECD, was that higher education is a semi-public rather than a purely public good and that the sources of HE funding should be diversified accordingly (Heyneman, 1994; Johnstone, D. Bruce, Arora, & Experton, 1998; OECD, 1990; Patrinos & Psacharopoulos, 2002; Salmi, J., 2002; World Bank, 1995). This justified both (higher) tuition fees, the rise of private providers of HE as well as new demands for accountability of public expenditure on education. Since the 1990ies, the number of private HEIs has risen all over the world, while the number of public HEIs has remained constant (UNESCO, 2004). A particularly extreme case is the growth of private, for-profit HEIs in the Former Soviet Union (FSU),

[5] The term "Washington consensus" was first coined in 1989 by English economist John Williamson to describe a set of 10 economic policy prescriptions considered as the "standard" reform package for developing countries in economic crisis, which was promoted by Washington, D.C.–based institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the US Treasury Department.

which will be discussed in the chapters discussing the country cases. Marketization has also led to a realignment of different types of HEIs. While in most countries, traditionally, private institutions would be funded mostly from private sources while public institutions would receive their full funding from public sources, this division is being blurred. On the one hand private HEIs increasingly receive public subsidies (either indirectly such as through the US Federal Direct Loan Program, or directly through subsidies to HEIs) and on the other hand, public HEIs are encouraged to generate revenue via tuition fees, capitalization of patents, donations, or research and consulting services (Newman et al., 2010, p. 107). Rather than distinguishing private and public institutions, in the future, it may be more meaningful to discern between for-profit and not-for-profit HEIs (UNESCO, 2004).

Autonomy, accountability, and quality assurance

In a now-seminal paper in higher education research, Guy Neave (1988) coined the phrase of the "evaluative state" which describes how governments were shifting from monitoring inputs of higher education towards a posteriori analysis of their performance, usually justified by considerations of efficiency and effectiveness in the context of mass higher education (Dill, 2007). In summary, there has been a "autonomy-accountability trade-off" (Newman et al., 2010, p. 104) by which public HEIs received greater internal and organizational autonomy, while governments simultaneously increased the demands of external accountability – giving more leeway to HEIs to organize their own operations while at the same time increasing the expectation to deliver value for money (Huisman & Kaiser, 2002). At the same time, in many countries, restrictions on the market entry of private providers of HE were loosened. A "market-like" situation with more autonomous State-funded HEIs and new private providers of HE, however, requires fair and objective systems of *accountability* and external *quality assurance*. As Harman (1998) points out:

> *"[…] quality assurance becomes of great importance in countries where, as a result of increased government emphasis on competition, markets and encouragement of private providers, there are community concerns about the possibility of quality being sacrificed in the search for profits." (Harman, 1998, p. 347).*

The existence of quality assurance procedures protecting "consumers" thus gains in importance in systems in which the government retreats from exercising direct control and ceases to be a service provider[6]. External system of quality assurance are a logical consequence of governments as the main "steering" agents of the HE system, with universities doing the "rowing". While quality assurance may not be a new idea in higher education, in OECD-countries there was a desire among political stakeholders and organizational theorists for a more systematic approach of addressing it within HEIs. Increasingly,

[6] To do so, and to create a functioning "market" of higher education, government need to align the regulatory environment OECD (2010, p. 22). Regulations may, among other things, affect relevant area such as planning and policy leadership; structure and governance of HEIs; financing, state resource allocation and subsidies as well as other incentives (monetary and non-monetary); transparency and information requirements (e.g. communication and reporting).

greater emphasis was being put on external scrutiny by relevant stakeholders such as government, employers and graduates as well as a greater demand for transparency about quality (Harman, 1998). In Europe, another major factor for this development was the creation of the European Higher Education Area through the so-called "Bologna Process", which will be covered in the following section (see chapter 3.2.2.6).

3.2.2.3 Internationalization and globalization

Since the days of the first universities in Europe, HEIs were international enterprises. Students and professors have always traveled across borders to learn and teach at the best universities. So, too, have models of universities traveled across borders, as forms of religious education or to train a country's elites. Colonial empires spread their institutions, and successful universities were emulated elsewhere. Just as the University of Berlin became a point of orientation for US research universities and universities in Central and Eastern Europe in the 19th century[7], the American research universities of the 20th and 21th century become models for universities worldwide in the current age.

While the flow of ideas across borders has always shaped higher education systems elsewhere and "globalization" is therefore far from a new phenomenon, the fall of socialism, the formation of political blocks such as the EU, and not least the rise in international trade made possible by the internet, have clearly *accelerated* this process and increased its *scope*. Globalization has promoted the free flow of goods, services, ideas, and people. Students with qualifications from other higher education systems move across borders to continue their studies. As they do, international recognition of the qualifications granted by their home country's higher education institutions gains in importance (Dill, 2010).

Internationalization and globalization of higher education are changing the landscape of formerly purely national HE systems worldwide (Huisman & Kaiser, 2002). The rapidly growing demand for higher education has provided incentives for new HE providers. The number of new private universities, foreign universities opening branch campuses, or granting licenses to private companies to award university degrees through franchising or validation agreements are on the rise (Brandenburg et al., 2013). These new "players" in the market of higher education are posing novel challenges to national systems of external quality assurance and have prompted action (Campbell, C. & van der Wende, 2001; Dill, 2010). The challenges of globalization and its impact on higher education are clearly visible in the debate on whether (higher) education is to be regarded as a common good or a service in the context of the General Agreement on Trades and Services (GATS) (Altbach, 2001) or, more recently, in the inclusion of for-profit cross-border higher education in the service directive of the European Union (Bischof,

[7] although very different aspects of the original model were emulated in different systems

2014). An inclusion of HE in any of these agreements has far-reaching consequences for higher education systems in the years to come, especially for those HE systems in which a central public authority has so far played the main role in their governance.

Improvements in information and communication technology developments are further speeding up internationalization and globalization processes (Huisman & Kaiser, 2002) and are changing the face of HE itself. New modes of delivery such as teaching online are threatening traditional universities (Gibbons, 1998). Due to the spread of technology, knowledge is no longer confined to "brick-and-mortar" universities or other traditional places of formal education. Instead, new formats of formal education appear, among them online universities, for-profit colleges, open universities, franchised degree programs, offshore branch campuses or Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These developments are changing the face of previously more homogeneous cultural and normative expectations about what constitutes higher education and force law-makers to develop a legal and policy framework to deal with these new developments.

In summary, growing public demand for HE, more diversified and faster-changing labor markets, rising costs, and a growing number of competing providers of HE have created a more competitive and faster-changing environment for HEIs. In the eyes of many regulators, the traditional practices in the governance of higher education systems are in need of an overhaul . In many countries around the world, this overhaul drew upon the ideas of *New Public Management* (NPM).

3.2.2.4 The Spread of New Public Management

Over the course of the 1980s, a number of OECD countries implemented a series of reforms in public sector governance which have been summarized under the umbrella lable "New Public Management" (NPM). The tenets of NPM have been strongly influenced by the perspective of new institutional economics: Concepts such as transaction costs, principal-agent relationships, surrounding uncertainty, adverse selection, and moral hazard are drawn upon to argue for greater operational autonomy, transparency and accountability in the provision of public services. Christopher Hood (1991) traces the development of NPM to the following four megatrends:

a) attempts to slow down or reverse government growth in terms of overt public spending and staffing
b) a shift toward privatization and quasi-privatization and away from core government institutions, with renewed emphasis on 'subsidiarity' in service provision
c) the development of automation, particularly in information technology, in the production and distribution of public services; and
d) the development of a more international agenda, increasingly focused on general issues of public management, poky design, decision styles and intergovernmental cooperation, on top of the older tradition of individual country specialisms in public administration.

Hood (1991) identifies the seven doctrinal components of new public management as follows:

No.	Doctrine	Meaning	Typical justification
1	'*hands-on professional management'* in the public sector	Active, visible, discretionary control of organizations from named persons at the top, 'free to manage'	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action, not diffusion of power
2	Explicit standards and measures of performance	Definition of goals, targets, indicators of success, preferably expressed in quantitative terms, especially for professional services	Accountability requires clear statement of goals; efficiency requires 'hard look' at objectives
3	Greater emphasis on *output controls*	Resource allocation and rewards linked to measured performance; breakup of centralized bureaucracy-wide personnel management	Need to stress *results* rather than *procedures*

4	Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector	Break-up of formerly 'monolithic' units, unbundling of uniform management systems into corporatized units around products, operating on decentralized 'one-line' budgets and dealing with one another on an 'arms-length' basis	Need to create 'manageable' units, separate *provision* and *production* interests, gain efficiency advantages of use of contract and franchise arrangements *inside* as well as outside the public sector
5	Shift to greater *competition* in public sector	Move to term contracts and public tendering procedures	*Rivalry* as the key to lower costs and better standards
6	Stress on *private-sector styles of management practice*	Move away from military-style 'public service ethic', greater flexibility in hiring and rewards; greater use of PR techniques	Need to use 'proven' private sector management tools in the public sector
7	Stress on greater *discipline* and *parsimony* in resource use	Cutting direct costs, raising labor discipline, resisting union demands, limiting 'compliance costs' to business	Need to check resource demands of public sector and 'do more with less'

Table 4: Doctrinal components of new public management (Hood, 1991)

The spread of New Public Management in higher education

Starting in the UK in the late 1980ies, traditional governance structures in HEIs began to be reformed in the spirit of NPM in Western Europe (Leišytė, Boer, & Enders, 2006). The Jarratt report[8] prepared by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP, 1985) called for a greater responsiveness of UK HEIs to the market, a professionalization of the university leadership, the introduction of managerial techniques in HEI administration, the introduction of unit costs and efficiency measures of resource utilization as well as an evaluations of university performance using qualitative and quantitative performance indicators. In the US, the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 allowed universities to patent and commercialize the results of publicly funded research (Newman et al., 2010, p. 61).

The formal justification for the adoption of NPM in HE of this model was twofold. On the one hand, the pressures of the global context of higher education and above all the much greater scale of higher education systems (see chapter 3.2.2) was argued to make an increase in effectiveness and efficiency im-

[8] Named, after its chairman, Sir Alex Jarratt

perative for HE systems for reasons of cost alone. On the other hand, collegial, disciplinary and democratic organization and individual autonomy, were increasingly perceived by proponents of NPM as ill-suited for the task of timely reaching informed decisions and good performance (Olsen, 2007). Indeed, they are increasingly seen by policy-makers as hindrances to an effective management of higher education following similar argumentations to the pointed criticism by Sir Eric Ashby, former master of Clare College, Cambridge, of his professoral colleagues:

> *"All over the country, these groups of scholars, who would not make a decision about the shape of a leaf or the derivation of a word or the author of a manuscript without painstakingly assembling the evidence, make decisions about admission policy, size of universities, staff-student ratios, content of courses, and similar issues, based on dubious assumptions, scrappy data, and mere hunch"* (Ashby, 1963, p. 93)

By the 1990ies, all Western European countries were implementing reforms aiming at transforming HEIs into more "complete organizations" (Hüther & Krücken, 2007, p. 28). All over the Anglo-Saxon world and Europe, these reforms shared a number of features: *A shift of power to the level of HE leadership* (often framed as increased "university autonomy"[9]) was hoped to make possible a more effective, goal-oriented management. External oversight by *governing boards with representatives of external stakeholders* was intended better align the goals and priorities of HEI leadership to the needs of universities' external stakeholders. *External accreditation and new oversight mechanisms* were introduced to assess and evaluate university performance (Brennan & Shah, 2000). University administrations' *freedom to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff* was enlarged with the hope to bring a greater degree of competition to bear on the behavior of academics, increase staffing flexibility and to "incentivize" academics to increase their productivity, and the quality or relevance of their work. New funding arrangements such as *lump-sum budgets*, and greater discretion over spending was intended to make HEIs more agile. The introduction of tuition fees, the possibility to capitalize on patents and was supposed to make HEIs more responsive to market-demands and more entrepreneurial in finding and attracting income from non-state sources. Governments reduced the prescription for administrative processes and direct intervention in HEI activities. Instead, HEIs were obligated to formulate institutional missions. Goals for HEIs were agreed-upon in *performance contracts* (often tied to funding).

A number of larger-scale comparative studies within Western European countries confirms this trend: Kogan et al. (2006) studied the changing role of the state in higher education governance in the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Norway. The study by Kehm and Lanzendorf (2006b) compares four European countries on the degree of changes in five major components of university governance (state regulation, stakeholder guidance, academic self-governance, managerial self-governance and competition for resources). The book "*University Governance: Western European Comparative Perspectives*" (Paradeise,

[9] At the expense of autonomy of individual units such as professors, faculties, departments or chairs.

2009) compares developments in the governance of higher education systems in seven Western European countries. All of these studies point out how there is a clear trend towards greater managerialism, through developments such as the promotion of strategic planning in terms of 3-4 year plans and university missions, increasing formal and actual autonomy of universities in defining their internal governance structures, increased authority of HEI presidents or rectors, an appointment of rectors and presidents by boards rather than election, the introduction of management instruments which enhance the role of senior management, greater jurisdiction of HEIs over their own resources, over human resources, over real estate and over equipment, a diversification of funding via tuition fees, funding from enterprises, regional authorities, more competitive distribution of funding, decrease of itemized budgets and introduction of global budgets and more cost accounting and internal audit systems, and a decrease in civil servants in universities, with an increasing number of temporary positions. However, while observing a general trend across countries, the authors also point out that each national case bears its own particularities and path dependencies, sometimes leading to contradictory development patterns.

3.2.2.5 The changing relationship of higher education, the market and the state

Scholars have tried to conceptualize higher education governance and its changes from many different vectors. At the level of higher education systems, the most frequent starting point has been to investigate the locus and balance of power on Clark's (1983) *'triangle of coordination'* between the State, the Market and the Academic Oligarchy. Building on his work, various studies have explored the changing relationship between state and HEIs (Gornitzka, Å., 1999; Kogan & Hanney, 2000; Salter & Tapper, 2013) and have proposed different labels for the changing relationships such as Van Vught (1989) and Goedegebuure et al. (1993) who observed a shift from a '*state control'* vs. a '*state supervising'* model. Other scholars have explored how the state itself has created more market-like conditions for higher education systems and how it retreats from its direct role in the management of higher education, but still is '*steering from a distance*' (Marginson, 1997; Meek, V. Lynn, Goedegebuure, Kivinen, & Rinne, 1996) by setting incentives and standards for relatively autonomous HEIs. In the same line of research, authors such as Neave (1998) and De Boer et al. (2007) demonstrated a shift in state influence from *ex-ante* to *ex-post control*, with the state focusing on outputs and performance indicators rather than on managing inputs.

Other scholars have studied the changes of authority and power taking place within HEIs, such as Sporn (1999) who argues that governance has become more shared, with a greater involvement of external stakeholders in setting goals and delivering accountability. Others have stressed how, as HEIs have adopted models of corporate governance and strategic management, professional authority vis-à-vis managerial authority in HEIs is declining (Currie & Newson, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Rhoades, 1998) Braun and Merrien (1999a) and Braun (2001) highlighted how New Managerialism is being adopted as the main model for steering HE systems in many OECD countries.

In one of the most influential papers on the changing governance of higher education, Gornitzka and Maassen (2000) analyzed changes in governance and steering approaches in higher education in the 1980s and 1990s in eight European countries. Building on a more generic framework by Olsen (1988), they proposed a typology of state steering approaches in higher education (*sovereign rationality-bounded steering, institutional steering, corporate-pluralist steering and supermarket steering models*) which they used to study changes in public administration and governance. Ferlie, Musselin & Andresani (2009) delineate three typical conceptions of state intervention in HE as which can be summarized as *state protection of HEI autonomy, state interventionism to serve the public good and the state utilizing market forces*. Each of these types of steering has as their point of departure a specific understanding of the nature, the role and the function of higher education, as well as the role of the state. Using the work by Gornitzka and Maassen (2000) as a structuring principle, I have summarized these different steering paradigms and their justification:

Role of State	**Role of HE**	**Type of Steering**	**Justification**
1. The sovereign state: *mediates interests of society and HEI and orients the development of HE; drives, commands and controls activities of HEI*	*higher education is seen as a governmental instrument for reaching political, economic or social goals.*	*Tight control over universities and colleges, with a strong emphasis on them being accountable to political authorities*	*The HE system is vulnerable to producer capture (Paradeise, 2009). The government needs to counteract this and champion powerless consumers. HE is no different than any other public service (health care of justice).* *The role of knowledge becomes more important in the knowledge-based society. The state invests more and is entitled to know that the investment is well-spent.*
2. The institutional state: *should protect the autonomy of HEIs and their academic freedom*	*HE is a separate sphere of society. Its own academic values and traditions allow it best to store and transmit knowledge, secure future*	*Institutional self-governance, collegial*	*Only academics as producers, owners, and users of academic knowledge know can*

	independent pursuit and transfer of knowledge, and act as a carrier of culture		*judge quality and reasonable costs which laymen cannot possibly judge.*
3. The corporate-pluralist state: *should organize the articulation of stakeholder interests*	*Different stakeholders with different legitimate interest formulate HE mission*	*Via the articulation of interests by different organized interest groups in a corporate network of public boards, councils and commissions.*	*Only the interaction of different legitimate stakeholder interests may lead to adequate goals and oversight in a complex field.*
4. classical liberal state (state supermarket model): *The State should stimulate the strength of market forces (encourage students to behave like consumers to spur competition and quality) and detect, prevent or repair market failures*	*Deliver services such as teaching and research for which there is a demand*	*Minimal.* *State only needs to make sure that market mechanisms in higher education run smoothly*	*Services such as teaching and research are commodities, rather than public goods.* *The market is the most efficient coordinating mechanism.*

Table 5: State steering paradigms in higher education based on Gornitzka and Maassen (2000)

Gornitzka and Maassen (2000, 283) identify a 'general move towards the supermarket steering model', but stress that most real cases are best characterized as hybrids between several models.

3.2.2.6 European integration, the Bologna Process, and the governance of higher education systems

Regional forces have also influenced the development of governance models. At the European level, at least three political agendas have shaped the development of governance of higher education. These include the European Union's (EU) *growth and innovation strategies* (formerly the Lisbon Strategy), which seek to capitalize on HE and research to strengthen knowledge economies, the *'Modernization Agenda'* of the European Commission (EC) through which it promoted the use of New Public Management (NPM)-inspired tools for the modernization of HEIs and thirdly, the *'Bologna Process',* a series

of intergovernmental ministerial meetings and agreements aiming at creating a single European Higher Education Area (EHEA). While the first two concern only EU Member States (which the countries I am studying are not), the Bologna Process has had a strong impact especially on the quality assurance in post-Soviet countries.

Indeed, the *Bologna Process* (BP) has established itself as the central platform for the integration of European HE systems (Knill, Vögtle, & Dobbins, 2013, p. 17). Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, 48 countries have joined the Bologna Process and are therefore considered to be part of the EHEA (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Member countries of the European Higher Education Area as of 2017

The Bologna Process includes *strategic objectives* (the establishment of a European area of higher education and the promotion of the European system of higher education world-wide) and *operational objectives* (Westerheijden, D. F. & et al., 2010b). The latter are formulated as nine "action lines" designed to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of Higher Education in Europe:

1. Establish a three-cycle system of higher education within a qualifications framework
2. promote mobility
3. develop quality assurance
4. increase employability
5. develop the European Higher Education Area in a global context
6. promote joint degrees
7. develop the recognition of qualifications
8. promote the social dimension of higher education
9. promote lifelong learning

It is interesting to note that the Bologna Process never declared the uniformity of national policies as its goal. The ministerial communiqués are not legally binding. Instead, the process follows the *open method of coordination* (Ruiter, 2010) and uses the voluntary identification of common goals and benchmarks as well as of instruments to reach them. Once identified, however, regular stocktaking exercises lead to

"naming, blaming, and shaming" which can create considerable pressure to produce progress (Enders, J. & Westerheijden, 2014).

The Bologna process is moved along by biannual conferences as transnational platforms in which Ministers responsible for higher education meet to discuss progress and next priorities. Between these meetings, national delegations and stakeholder groups come together in "Follow-Up-groups" to develop strategies to realize the objectives of the Bologna Process. Several European non-state actors are also engaged in the Bologna Process. These include the European Commission, which in 2001 became a full member of the process, as well as the Council of Europe, and a number of umbrella organizations of universities (EUA), students (ESU), non-university HEIs (EURASHE), quality assurance agencies (ENQA), UNESCO, Education International, and BUSINESSEUROPE, as well as others try to influence the process by making policy recommendations themselves.

The role and relevance of the Bologna Process for quality assurance

There is a point to be made for why the goal of improving mobility for studies and work creates a necessity for greater transparency of quality of higher education: The quality of an individual's education is inherently difficult to gauge for HEIs or employers. In this context, an individual's higher education qualification (e.g. degree diploma) acts as a signaling device for his or her acquired knowledge and skills. It can serve this function because employers or HEIs have trust in the institution that issued it. Within a national context, employers and HEIs are usually familiar with domestic qualifications and know how to assess the value of a specific qualification. When it comes to qualifications acquired in another country, however, this is not necessarily the case. For the recognition of qualifications, it is therefore essential that there be mechanisms to establish trust. This is a major justification for a transnational framework of "accountability-type" quality assurance of HE qualifications, both for credit mobility (student mobility within a certain study program, e.g. through programs such as "Erasmus") as well as for degree mobility (student mobility to study an entire degree abroad, e.g. doing a Master's Degree in another country).

While in the beginning of the Bologna Process, there was only a vague reference to QA, the topic has since gained greater prominence and specificity with each subsequent ministerial communiqué (Bischof et al., 2014). While the Prague Communiqué (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2001) only mentioned the dissemination of best practice and unspecified "evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms", the Berlin Communiqué (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2003) became more specific by calling for:

- *A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.*
- *Evaluation of programs or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.*
- *A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.*
- *International participation, cooperation and networking.*

Since its humble beginnings, quality assurance is now widely regarded one of the most successful action lines of the Bologna Process (Bollaert, 2014). Between a number of instruments and networks were developed and endorsed by the European Ministers responsible for Higher Education and promoted by the European Commission. By 2014, the European QA architecture consisted of:

- jointly adopted **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)** for HEIs and QA agencies
- the **European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)** for QAAs operating according to the ESG
- the **Qualification Framework for the EHEA (QF EHEA)** and the **European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**
- The first multidimensional tool for information provision on the quality (or rather "qualities") of individual HEIs **u-multirank**
- a large number of stakeholder organizations working on issues ranging from on quality assurance to financing and governance of HEIs (e.g. ENQA, EUA, ESU, EURASHE, Business Europe, Educational international)

While certainly not an exclusive consequence of the Bologna Process, quality assurance systems in the European Higher Education area proliferated at an impressive pace in the decade following the Bologna declaration (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004). Quality assurance as a policy instrument of higher education has become nigh universal (Westerheijden, D. F., 2007) and has exerted a strong influence on higher education policy (Dobbins & Knill, 2009; Jakobi, Martens, & Wolf, 2010; Westerheijden, D. F. & et al., 2010a; Witte, 2006). In the early 1990s less than 50% of the European countries had quality assessment activities in place at the supra-institutional level (Schwarz & Westerheijden, 2004). In the period from 1999 to 2010, almost all European countries adopted some form of quality assurance scheme: 22 countries established new national agencies for quality assurance, with half of these being set up since 2005 (Eurydice, 2010). The vast majority of countries opted for the implementation of an accreditation-based system of quality assurance (Stensaker, 2011).

3.2.3 Instruments of Governance of Higher Education Systems

After a general overview of authority distribution, processes, and structures which are relevant to the governance of higher education systems, we will now turn to the *instruments* by which HEIs within higher education systems are steered. These are *Quality Assurance (Educational Standards, quality assessment, and information provision); 2. Regulation of admissions to higher education; 3. Institutional structures, decision-making and autonomy; 4. Higher education financing and incentive structures.*

3.2.3.1 Quality Assurance (Educational Standards, quality assessment, and information provision)

3.2.3.1.1 Quality in higher education

Before turning to the instruments of quality assurance, it seems pertinent to briefly consider what is meant by the term "quality" in the context of higher education.

According to Kluge & Seebold (2011) in an overview by Bernhard (2011, pp. 44–45), the term "quality" dates back to ancient philosophy where, in Aristoteles' ontology, the term defines the essential feature of a matter which makes it unique. The term derived from the Latin noun *qualitas* (consistence, character) and the adverb *qualis* (how made? of which manner?). In the 17th century, the French term qualité started to be used in the language of trade and developed various scientific meanings (Pfeifer, 1997, p. 1065). The American Society for Quality (American Society for Quality, 1993-2014) defines "quality" as a

> *"subjective term for which each person or sector has its own definition. In technical usage, quality can have two meanings: 1. the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs; 2. a product or service free of deficiencies. According to Joseph Juran, quality means "fitness for use;" according to Philip Crosby, it means "conformance to requirements."*

After the notion of quality had appeared in HE in the 1980ies, there were a number of original attempts to contribute to defining quality in higher education (Harvey, L., 1995, 2006; Harvey, L. & Green, 1993b). The most-often cited overview of competing philosophies of quality is provided by Harvey and Green (1993a) and distinguishes to following approaches to defining quality:

1. *Quality as Exception: distinctive, embodies in excellence, passing a minimum set of standards.*
2. *Quality as Perfection: zero defects, getting things right the first time*
3. *Quality as Fitness for purpose: relates quality to a purpose, defined by the provider.*
4. *Quality as Value for money: a focus on efficiency and effectiveness, measuring outputs against inputs.*
5. *Quality as Transformation: a qualitative change; education is about doing something to the student as opposed to something for the consumer. Includes concepts of enhancing and empowering democratization of the process, not just outcomes.*

The last definition, in particular, recognizes that students are not only customers in higher education but also its object as they are being transformed. However, as Jethro Newton (2007) pointed out, all definitions of quality lack a solid theoretical foundation. In summary, quality in higher education is a goal-dependent, stakeholder-relative category with "*(at least) as many definitions of quality in higher education as there are categories of stakeholders […], times the number of purposes, or dimensions, these stakeholders distinguish*" (Brennan, Goedegebuure, Shah, Westerheijden, & Weusthof, 1992). As a consequence, the concept of quality cannot be understood detached from its context and the particular purposes assigned to it by the political actors, which makes the concept of "quality" is ultimately a political one (Westerheijden, D. F., 2005). Depending on the specific explicit or implicit understanding of qual-

ity, QA can be aimed at social accountability, academic improvement, institutional performance efficiency and effectiveness, 'value for money' or 'consumer' protection. Any reflection about quality assurance would, therefore, be well-advised to take this into consideration. For the purpose of this dissertation, the analysis will be restricted to the quality of the teaching and learning function of HE.

3.2.3.1.2 Quality Assurance in higher education

In most publications on quality assurance (QA), the question about its nature is answered from a historical perspective. The term "Quality Assurance", originally developed in manufacturing industries and promoted by seminal figures should as W. Edwards Deming (2000) and Kaoru Ishikawa (Ishikawa, 1985), referred to processes of systematic verification against predefined standards, monitoring of processes and associated feedback loops. The aims were to create a framework for systematic improvement in order to reduce process variation focusing on customer needs. In higher education, quality assurance appeared as a result of an overall change in governance, society and the educational system over the course of the 1980ies and 1990ies. The decisive factors behind the emergence of quality assurance are seen by Henkel and Little (1999) as the massification and diversification of higher education on the one hand, and on the implementation of practices of new public management on the other. Most authors on quality assurance follow this view, which is explained in further detail in this chapter.

The term "quality assurance" in higher education refers to all "*policies, procedures and practices that are designed to achieve, maintain or enhance quality as it is understood in a specific context*" (EACEA, 2012a, p. 62).

A common distinction in quality assurance is the distinction between external and internal quality assurance. *External Quality Assurance* (EQA) relates to the relationship between governments and HEIs while *Internal Quality Assurance* (IQA) describes the policies, procedures and practices within individual HEIs. Internal quality assurance often relies on cyclical evaluations using internal or external peers, stakeholder representation in advising or decision-making bodies, the use of surveys (e.g. to assess teaching quality, satisfaction with services), the collection and analysis of statistical data and performance indicators, and defined processes of internal quality review and control. While IQA is not a focus of this study, it is often an object of EQA. A review of existing research and policy-documents on internal and external quality assurance illustrates that both may be intended (by different stakeholders) to serve a wide array of possible functions for the HE system:

Internal Quality Assurance	**External Quality Assurance**
1. Increasing internal coupling of higher education institutions, leading to a stronger institutional leadership in higher education (Askling, 1997).	1. Linking external stakeholder and government priorities perspectives to the strategy formulation of higher education institutions (Westerheijden, D. F. & Leegwater, 2002b)

2. *Improving information on internal performance and goal achievement brought about by increasing centralization of information and clearer lines of responsibility (Stensaker, 2008)* 3. *Improving internal steering of HEIs (Westerheijden, D. F. & Leegwater, 2002b)* 4. *Enhancing teaching and learning, research or the services of the universities administration* 5. *Integrating students and other stakeholders by providing a more legitimate role (Harvey, L. & Knight, 1996)*	2. Delegating authority from the state to HEIs (Stensaker, 2003) 3. Increasing accountability of the use public funds (Stensaker, 2003) 4. Increasing transparency of input and output of HEIs (Maassen, P. A.M, 1997, p. 117) to better link cost and quality (Salter & Tapper, 2000). 5. Increasing legitimacy, credibility, and international recognition of degrees and diplomas to facilitate student and alumni mobility *(Stensaker, 2003; Westerheijden, D. F., 2003; Westerheijden, D. F. & Leegwater, 2002b)* 6. Protecting students, employers and society from sub-standard educational programs (Westerheijden, D. F., 2003) 7. Enforcing consistency in degree nomenclature and structures (Westerheijden, D. F. & Leegwater, 2002b) 8. Enhancing the quality of higher education provision (Stensaker, 2003) 9. Stimulating self-regulation capacity and competitiveness of HEIs (Jeliazkova & Westerheijden, 2002; Stensaker, 2003)

Table 6: Functions of internal and external quality assurance

The most heavily debated distinction of function of QA systems is the distinction of *accountability versus improvement*. Accountability as discussed in the context of quality assurance, refers to notions of efficiency, effectiveness and the maintenance of (academic) standards (Harvey, L. & Knight, 1996, pp. 72–74): Efficiency relates to the aspect of economic planning (what is spent) and to institutional efficiency (per unit-costs). Effectiveness is concerned with outputs or outcomes (such as the number of graduates or their academic performance). The maintenance of academic standards is usually used as the main justification for accreditation systems. The improvement function of QA relates to providing HEIs with necessary information, impetus or governance structures to support institutional learning. A number of authors have pointed to the inherent tensions between accountability and improvement as goals of QA (Blanco Ramírez, 2013; Danø & Stensaker, 2007; Meade & Woodhouse, 2000; Thune, 1996; Vroeijenstijn, A. I., 1995) and the introduction of QA has been resisted by academics as wholly

illegitimate or unfit to attain its intended purposes. The famous "egg-laying wool-milk sow"[10] of quality assurance has not been found yet.

3.2.3.1.3 Profession, state and market in quality assurance

Considering the multitude of functions that quality assurance is intended to serve as well and the many different levels it addresses (e.g. the level of the higher education system, the level of institutions, the level of individual study programs), it is not surprising that a myriad of external and internal quality assurance instruments has been developed, each with their particular focus[11]. The organizations which conduct, coordinate or oversee QA are diverse, as are the different arrangements concerning the relative roles of HEIs, agencies and governments in the process. Some patterns are visible though.

Building upon the seminal work by Burton R. Clark (1983), Dill (2010) distinguishes three approaches to regulate the quality of higher education: A European model in which state educational ministries exercised QA by means of central control, a US-American model combining limited state control with market competition of universities and QA agencies, and a British model in which the state essentially ceded responsibility for QA to self-accrediting universities. **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** illustrates these models with representative external QA practices organized by the locus of authority over QA and which will be explained below.

Locus of authority	*Professional (self) regulation*	*State (direct) regulation*	*Market regulation*
Practices	Professional accreditation and licensure Voluntary institutional accreditation External examining	National qualifications frameworks Subject assessments State-conducted accreditation Academic audits Performance-based funding or contracting National examinations or surveys	Commercial information provision, for example, institutional or program performance data, assessments, and rankings

Table 7: QA practices organized by locus of authority over QA. Taken from Dill (2010)

Professional Self-Regulation

Professional self-regulation relies on the professional identity, academic norms and values of the academic community for assuring the quality of academic provision. In QA schemes, a professional body or association is charged by the academic community with conducting QA practices. An example for

[10] In German-speaking countries the "*eierlegende Wollmilchsau"* (literally, an "egg-laying, wool and milk-producing pig") has become a popular symbol for a product or a solution that meets all requirements perfectly and only yields benefits in all regards.

[11] It should, however, be noted that most of the academic debate and literature on quality assurance in higher education primarily focuses on the quality of teaching and learning as opposed to the quality of research. This may be explained in part because there are already well-established quality assurance mechanisms in research such as peer-review procedures in refereed journals, quantitative measures such as citation indices or research funding allocation is often based on the assessed quality of proposals. These mechanisms have developed prior to the widespread use of the term "quality assurance".

such a model is the US-American accreditation system, in which regional accreditation bodies are recognized by the state, but enjoy a considerable degree of autonomy in defining their processes and quality criteria (For an in-depth description of this model, see Crow (2002).

State (direct) regulation

State (direct) regulation of academic quality describes approaches in which the state plays a pivotal role in defining and assuring quality. Examples are the *gosudarstvennyye obrazovatel'nyye standarty* ("State Educational Standards") in Russia or the former *Rahmenprüfungsordung* ("framework examination regulation") in Germany. Usually, standards are developed involving the academic community but are legitimized and enforced by the State. Other QA-instruments in which the state plays a central role are performance funding and contracts as well as any quality-related regulations the state puts in place and which HEIs are obliged to comply with.

Market Regulation

Finally, market regulation as an approach to QA works via competition and "consumer choice". A prerequisite for quality-based informed choice is adequate, understandable and accessible information about quality. The coordination and steering of HE systems thus requires well-defined essential performance information that universities would need to provide and maintain up-to-date (Dill & Soo, 2005). The most widely used instruments for which it has been argued that they may serve a market regulation mechanism are university rankings.

In Christopher Hood's cross-country, cross-sectoral study on controlling public services, Hood and colleagues (Hood, 2004) describe four primary means of control as "Contrived Randomness" (control of corruption by a degree of unpredictable elements), "oversight" (control through government regulation), "competition" (control through rivalry) and "mutuality" (control through peers). It is evident that the latter three categories correspond to Dill's three types forms of regulation described above[12]. It is important to note that there are no "pure forms" of these approaches. Instead, in any HE system, a combination of these mechanisms will be at work. In addition, Dill (2010) points out that any given instrument of quality assurance (such as program accreditation) can represent a form of professional, state or market regulation, depending on who conducts it, what its legal status is and what the consequences are. Dill also argues that, because professional self-regulation or market mechanisms can only be adequate mechanisms of protecting the public interest if they are made compulsory or highly advisable by the State[13], any effective form of professional or market self-regulation should be understood as an alternative form of state instruments for regulating academic quality. Dill follows that the real question for designing

[12] Hood and colleagues (2004, p. 199) find that in higher education, contrived randomness does seem to play only a relatively minor role as a distinct governance mechanism, although it does appear in combination with other mechanisms.

[13] The example given by Dill (2010) is US-American accreditation which is, albeit not compulsory, a prerequisite for students applying for federal financial aid – a source of income that no HEI would want to miss.

effective regulation for governments is therefore not, whether or not they want to play a role, but rather which combination of mechanisms they can employ to most effective and efficient in assuring academic quality within a given context.

3.2.3.1.4 Instruments employed in quality assurance

Dill (2010) distinguished three principle instruments of (external) quality assurance: Qualifications frameworks, quality assessments and provision of information. The three types are closely linked: Qualification frameworks are used to define the expected outcomes of the educational process. Quality assessment is used to ascertain to what degree these outcomes have been reached. Lastly, provision of information (e.g. through university rankings) are employed with the hope that making the "performance" of higher education transparent, market mechanisms will pressure HEIs to improve this performance. In this chapter, I will use Dill's framework as a basis for presenting various instruments used in QA.

1. Qualification standards and frameworks

A qualification "is a device whereby an individual can, with credibility (i.e. without further assessment) and at relatively low cost, signal/assure/convince others that he/she possesses certain types of knowledge, skills, intellectual capacity, competencies and so on" (Blackmur, 2004b, p. 108). Standards defining curricular contents leading up to formal qualifications have been around ever since professions organized themselves in the guilds of medieval times. To this day, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies commonly play a role in defining the necessary standards for holders of certain qualifications (most notably in the medical, law and engineering professions).

In the past, these standards most commonly focused on the contents of the training program leading up to a qualification and paid little heed to the relationship between qualifications. Increasing student and graduate mobility, the exponential growth of private and public HEIs and the advent of cross-border providers of HE, the possibilities of distance learning have made it clear that the great variety of different qualifications in different countries can be an obstacle to cross-border collaboration and student mobility. Within HE systems, the political goal of life-long learning makes it necessary to define possible pathways through different branches of the educational system (e.g. to make a transition from vocational to higher education possible).

Qualification Frameworks (QFs) describe qualifications by defining learning outcomes associated with them. They also usually situate qualifications on a continuum of agreed levels of education (such as the competences to be achieved at the Bachelor, Master and PhD levels in the QA-EHEA). The OECD (2006) defines QFs in the following way:

> *A qualifications framework is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves or made explicit in the form of a set of level*

> *descriptors. The scope of frameworks may be comprehensive of all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector for example initial education, adult education and training or an occupational area. Some frameworks may have more design elements and a tighter structure than others; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners. All qualifications frameworks, however, establish a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally.*

Qualifications Frameworks thus indicates equivalence of different qualifications situated on the same level and show how learners can progress from one level to another (Tuck, 2007). An important rationale for the development of such frameworks is to facilitate international recognition of academic degrees, thus facilitating student mobility and employability in a globalized economy (Dill, 2010). Besides national qualifications frameworks, there are also regional and sectoral (such as the UK subject benchmarks program or the German *Rahmenprüfungsordnung*) frameworks. On the European level, the Qualifications Frameworks in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) were developed.

QFs can define qualifications in reference to achieved learning outcomes or competences or in terms of packages and courses. By defining quality in terms of outcomes, qualifications frameworks provide the basis for their assessment though external quality assurance (McInnis, 2005). National qualifications frameworks and subject benchmarks are intended to regulate the *fitness-of-purpose* of higher education (Williams, 2005). Various methodological problems and questions of the overall fitness-for-purpose of QFs are raised by observers (Allias, 2007; Blackmur, 2004a; Williams, 2005), which will not be discussed here.

2. Quality Assessments

The advent of the evaluative state and the ideas of new public management (see chapter 3.2.2.3) have led to increased government attention towards the measurement of outcome relative to the control of input- and process factors. Approaches to quality assessment have become the instrument most closely associated with the term "quality assurance", much more so than qualifications standards or rankings. Indeed, in a substantial part of the literature on quality assurance, the various schemes of assessing quality have become synonymous with "quality assurance" per se.

In the vast majority of cases, external quality assurance methodologies follow a "general model" first described by van Vught and Westerheijden (1994). The four steps of this model are a self-review by the unit or HEI under scrutiny in which it provides information on the relevant criteria of the assessment in a self-evaluation report. Based on this report, a peer-review with or without a site-visit takes place, in which external (peer) experts verify and deepen their judgment of the assessed object. The peer review, in turn, is followed by a report which may or may not result in a formal decision and/or recommendations for improvement.

Quality assessments can follow a Standards-based Approach (SBA) which is associated with the compliance to a norm of predefined standards, regardless of institutional diversity (Al-Hassnawi, 2010). The standard may take on the form of a measurable benchmark or a professional judgment. Assessments that follow a Fitness-for-purpose Approach (FFP) take the stated purpose of an HEI or an academic program as their point of departure (sometimes also asking whether or not this purpose may be deemed acceptable in a given context). The assessment then judges to what degree the stated purposes have been achieved.

For external quality assessment, the following three instruments are most commonly used:

1. **(Academic) accreditation** is a standards-based approach used to certify that study programs, quality management systems (or other subunits) comply with certain (minimum) standards, thereby awarding them the right to exist, a greater degree of autonomy or other benefits. International accreditation leading to internationally recognized **quality labels** are a particular form of accreditation.
2. **Evaluations/subject assessments** are used to provide study programs, organizational units, projects or institutions with informed external feedback based on a systematic, criteria-oriented approach to data collection. Depending on their focus, they may be Standards-based or follow a Fitness-for-purpose Approach.
3. **Academic (Quality) Audits** are evaluation mechanisms that investigate the (internal) quality management arrangements of an HEI. Depending on their focus, they may be Standards-based or follow a Fitness-for-purpose Approach.

The most comprehensive overview of approaches to quality assessment (labeled "Approaches to Quality Assurance Management") is provided by Grant Harman (1998) and is reproduced in **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** to illustrate the variety of forms which quality assessments can take on:

3. Information Provision

A third category of instruments used in quality assurance is information provision. While information per se does not influence quality directly, making performance transparent can be a powerful tool to motivate stakeholders such as academics, students or politicians to take action. Providing valid information about the quality of HE is tricky business, however. As Dill (2010) points out, the benefits of higher education to society, while many in number and scope[14], they are notoriously difficult to assess. Gauging the relative contribution of any particular HEI to society is even more difficult. To do so, proxy indicators based on a causal theory of the effects of HE need to be developed. The validity of information instruments is thus directly related to their ability to measure or closely approximate the relevant outcomes of higher education (Dill & Soo, 2005).

Such indicators may include immediate outcome measures such as graduate placement, salaries, and their retroactive satisfaction with their education, macro-level process indicators such as student test scores, completion rates, and marks; or micro-level various process measures such as student engagement (McCormick, 2013). The biggest challenge in using information as a tool for quality assurance are developing valid and reliable indicators. Common problems of indicators used as a proxy for quality in higher education are that they are 1. backwards-oriented (such as the number of Nobel prize winners as a proxy for excellence in research), 2. of questionable construct validity (such as an Employer reputation survey to gauge the quality of applied training and research), 3. of doubtful reliability (e.g. in the case of very low response rates on surveys) and 4. the fact that some indicators present the danger of turning into self-fulfilling prophecies (such as any academic reputation survey) (Federkeil, 2013).

The first systematic instrument of information provision was the annual report of statistical data collected and published by the Commission of the US Bureau of Education in the late 19th century in the US, which also led to first "official" classification of institutions (Rauhvargers, op. 2011, p. 19). Performance indicators collected by public authorities had been initially developed to help policy-makers make informed decisions and, since the 1990ies, to be used in steering instruments like performance-based funding or university performance contracts (Dill, 2010).

For the most part, however, indicators are being gathered and published by a wide range of public authorities, academic, nonprofit, or commercial organizations. In 1957 the Chicago Tribune was the first

[14] A study by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (2013) cites greater social cohesion, less crime, greater social mobility, healthier lifestyles, longer life expectancy, more civic engagement, and better overall life satisfaction as only some of the positive effects of higher education on the individual, society and economy at large.

newspaper that published a ranking of HEIs, followed by outlets such as US NEWS and others. Having been confined to the US in the 20th century, the era of global rankings started when the Shanghai Jiao Tong University published its first 'Academic Ranking of World Universities' in 2003. These rankings, such as the Shanghai Ranking, the Times Higher Education, the QS World university rankings or the CHE/u-multirank subject-based rankings, collect and present data that makes certain quality dimensions visible and comparable to interested stakeholders. However, in addition to methodological difficulties in developing good indicators, most university rankings face a number of further problems and shortcomings. As Gero Federkeil (2013) points out: The existing (global) rankings

1) are biased against other fields than the (bio-medical, natural) sciences,
2) focus on research (or web appearance - but users usually believe they show university performance in general),
3) have severe problems with regard to validity / reliability, are biased against non-English-speaking countries,
4) make only the profile of comprehensive research universities transparent,
5) measure what is measurable instead of what is relevant,
6) are sometimes driven more by reputation than by actual current performance,
7) have in some cases non-transparent methods,
8) do not highlight disciplinary differences and show only institutional averages,
9) exaggerate small differences in league tables and
10) are often not focused on specific target groups, without necessarily helping prospective students.

Using a limited set of defined indicators over a longer period of time creates strong incentives to act in order to improve performance on the indicator, rather than improvements in quality. This fact is aptly stated in "Campbell's law" *"The more any quantitative social indicator is used for social decision-making, the more subject it will be to corruption pressures and the more apt it will be to distort and corrupt the social processes it is intended to monitor" (Campbell, D. T., 1979).*

To the degree to which student choice has an impact on university funding or reputation, however, it can act as a powerful incentive for HEIs to improve their performance (Dill, 2010). This holds particularly true for students of high ambition and achievement, as the majority of students typically choose an HEI or degree programs for diverse educational, social, and personal factors (Dill & Soo, 2005). However, policymakers and academic staff often pay great attention to publicly available information on the quality of "their" HEIs. Because of the importance that is assigned to rankings internationally, they may become a common benchmark for what constitutes quality in higher education (Dill & Soo, 2005). This way, ultimately, the international standard definition of "quality" may suffer from the very methodological limitations cited above, give undue power to the producers of international rankings and may have a detrimental steering effect on the entire HE system. Illustrating the last post, it has been argued that

> *"League tables […], while used primarily by a select group of students, may shape public opinion about what constitutes a quality education in ways that negatively affect both student consumers and institutional behavior. […] Further, there is some evidence that the focus of US league tables on reputation and the particular indicators used to measure reputation may be contributing to the continually rising costs of US higher education as well as providing incentives for colleges and universities to invest in actions and strategies that actually detract from the social benefits traditionally provided by higher education."* (Dill & Soo, 2005, p. 523)

Dill & Soo (2005) argue that in these cases, governments should make sure that appropriate consumer information will be available provided on higher education. The new European ranking "u-multirank", which is funded by the European Commission, is justified on the same grounds.

3.2.3.2 The role of the institution in the governance of higher education systems – Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

Institutional Autonomy

To the degree to which the State or other actors in the higher education system level regulate the operation of HEIs, it determines the degree of autonomy that HEIs enjoy. The interplay of external influence and regulation and autonomous actions by HEIs therefore form the whole of higher education system governance. For all practical purposes, "institutional autonomy" thus refers to the relations between the state and higher education institutions and the degree of control over certain aspects of its operations that is exerted by the state. It follows, also, that university autonomy therefore has as many different aspects as does its governance.

Secondly, autonomy as a concept differs based on the historical and cultural settings, legal traditions, norms and understandings. In other words, what is perceived as greatly enhanced autonomy in one context, would still be perceived as an inacceptable restriction of academic freedom in other HE traditions.

In the context of new public management, institutional autonomy is of central importance and calls for greater autonomy have been on the agenda not only of government hoping for greater self-steering, but also of university representatives. The *Magna Charta Universitatum*, a document summarizing universities' (or their rectors') understanding of their place and role in the 21st century, drafted for the occasion of the anniversary of University of Bologna by the European Rectors' Conference (now EUA) in 1988[15], states that HEIs "*expect their respective States and legislatures to recognise their autonomy and independence from every form of power, the freedom of their faculty members in teaching and research, and freedom for students, who are entitled to an effective education" (Monaco, 2002)*.

[15] In 2000, the European University Association and the University of Bologna jointly created the *Magna Charta Observatory*, to monitor academic freedom and university autonomy. By 2017, the document had been signed by 805 universities from 85 countries

Many authors have proposed concepts of institutional autonomy (Berdahl, 1990; Dill, 2001; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; Fielden, 2008; Neave, G. & Van Vught, Frans A, 1994; Volkwein & Malik, 1997). Among these definitions, the most widespread definitions may be Berdahl's (1990) differentiation of *substantive* vs. *procedural* autonomy as "*the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine its own goals and programs"* (substantive autonomy) and "*the power of the university or college in its corporate form to determine the means by which its goals and programs will be pursued*" (procedural autonomy).

A recent large-scale exploratory study in 33 countries by the European University Association (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009) has also received a lot of attention, breaking down university autonomy into the four component parts *Organizational, Financial, Staffing, and Academic Autonomy*. In a follow-up project (Estermann, Nokkala, & Steinel, 2011) created a scorecard and rated different countries on these four dimensions (see Table 8).

Organizational Autonomy	**Financial autonomy**	**Staffing autonomy**	**Academic Autonomy**
The ability to decide on organizational structures and institutional governance – in particular, the ability to establish structures and governing bodies, university leadership and who is accountable to whom	The ability to decide on financial issues – in particular the different forms of acquiring and allocating funding, the ability to charge tuition fees, to accumulate surplus, to borrow and raise money from different sources, the ability to own land and buildings and reporting procedures as accountability tools	The ability to decide on staffing matters – in particular the capacity to recruit staff, the responsibility for terms of employment such as salaries and issues relating to employment contracts such as civil servant status	The ability to decide on academic matters – in particular the capacity to define the academic profile, to introduce or terminate degree programs, to define the structure and content of degree programs, roles and responsibilities with regard to the quality assurance of programs and degrees and the extent of control over student admissions.

Table 8: Four Dimensions of University Autonomy (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009)

The results show a clear trend towards greater autonomy in all of these areas, reflected in greater freedom in the recruitment and appointment of staff, and setting salary levels, academic matters allowing (and encouraging) universities to develop their own institutional strategies and academic profiles, as

well as greater financial autonomy and the use of block-grant funding, being accompanied by a trend towards competition-oriented funding policies and encouraged third-party funding.

It is important to note, however, that even countries, where HEIs have a large degree of autonomy, are hardly unitary as the power within the institution may be rather diversely distributed between the institutional level, the basic units and individual professors.

For the purpose of this study, changes in organizational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy will be studied.

3.2.3.3 Regulating access to higher education systems

From the perspective of academics working in higher education institutions, it is highly desirable to teach the best prepared students. Prior knowledge is the key determinant of learning effectiveness and general productivity. From the perspective of the academic process and the academic profession, access to higher education should therefore be as selective as possible, as the best-prepared will gain most from participating from higher education, are least demanding in terms of counselling and support, and have the greatest likelihood of making contributions to research and service.

From a societal and an economical perspective, on the other hand, wide participation in higher education is highly desirable, as it yields a multitude of private and public benefits. The following figure from McMahon (2009) provides an overview:

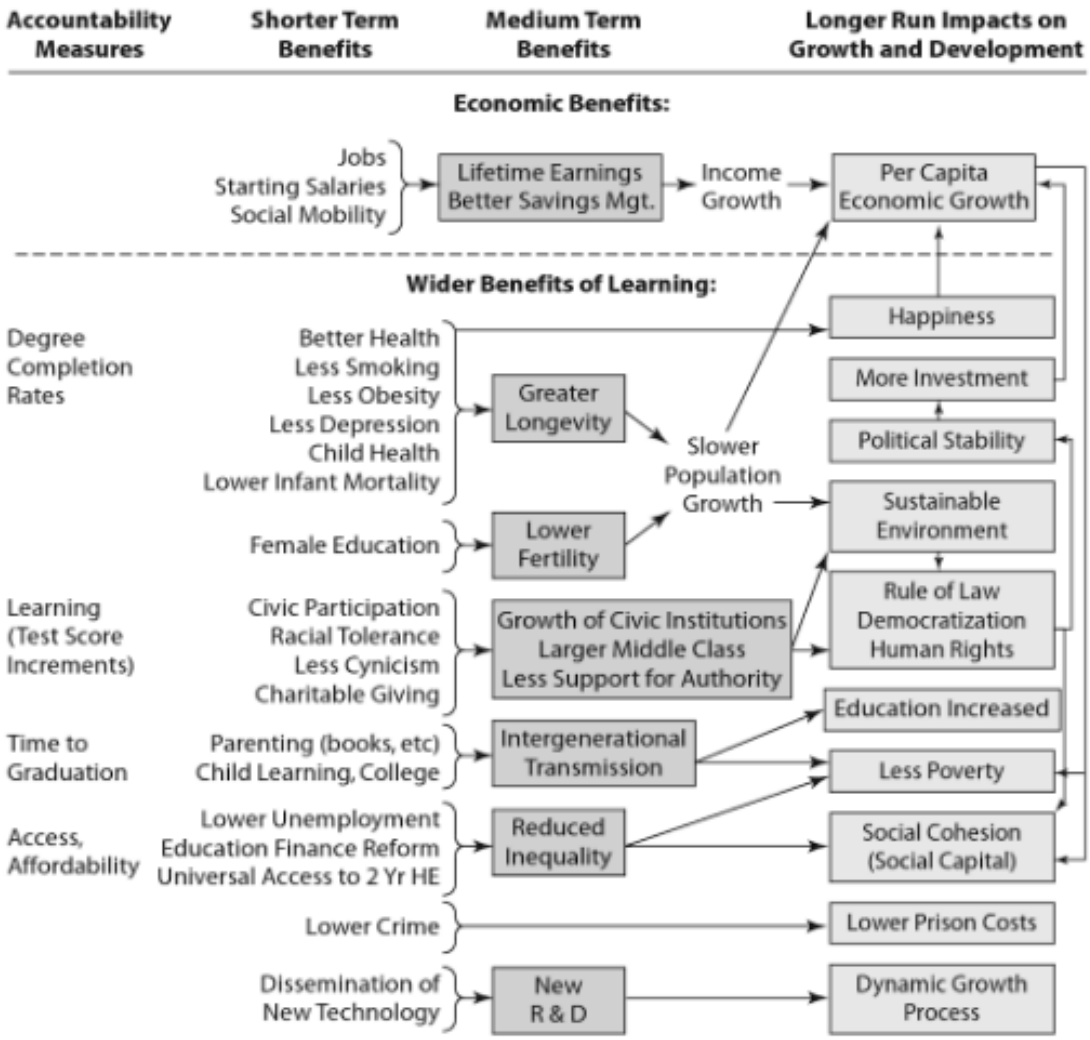

Figure 8: Private and public short, mid- and long-term benefits and impacts from higher education (From McMahon, 2009)

Both from the perspective of the individual seeking to gain the private benefits of a higher education as well for society benefiting from the positive social externalities, it is thus highly desirable to assure access. A caveat of this assumption is that the public benefits only materialize if and when higher education is in fact taking place. Because of the fact that the presence of higher education is "certified" by having a university degree, and because some of the private benefits of a degree (such as access to certain professions, higher salary, social mobility) can be attained just with having the degree, there is a clear incentive for fraud. Individuals may try to attain a degree without the investment in time, resources and effort, while dishonest HEIs may, for many reasons, be willing to be less rigorous in their standards or even issue a higher education degree against a fee ("diploma mills"). The question of regulating

access to higher education, then, becomes a crucial component in safeguarding the trust in higher education credentials as well as in assuring the quality of a country's future highly qualified specialists.

Exerting control over admission to higher education furthermore represents control over the overall size and selectivity of the higher education system. In systems in which the size of the enrolment determines the level of financing (which is the case all tuition-based HE systems and almost all publicly funded systems), it furthermore represents control over the viability of those HEIs catering to certain groups of students. The nature of the mechanisms by which access to higher education is regulated (or their absence) and who has the authority these processes (typically the central government, individual universities or schools via access-granting school-leaving certifications) is therefore a central component in the governance of higher education systems.

3.2.3.4 The role of financing in higher education governance

As all organizations, HEIs require funding to operate. Salaries need to be paid, infrastructure maintained and expanded and research projects sometimes require considerable expenditures on equipment and consumables. Higher education institutions, especially research universities, are very costly enterprises, and have only increased to be so during the 20th century. This is related to several factors:

From an economic point of view, the difficulty of reducing unit costs through the substitution of capital for labor has not been possible in education in the same way as it has been in other industries. „Baumol's cost disease" (Baumol & Bowen, 1968) describes the phenomenon that rising salaries in other industries and the rising costs of living, in turn, require personnel-intensive enterprises[16] to offer competitive salaries to attract enough highly qualified individuals, thus driving up the costs for the services these enterprises provide. Compounding this effect has been the expansion and massification of higher education, which has led to surging enrollment, increasing overall expenditures for higher education even further. The rise in higher educational costs in excess of public revenues is a worldwide phenomenon (Johnstone, B., 2015), as have been the patterns of policies, even in countries with very dissimilar political-economic systems and higher educational traditions, and at extremely dissimilar stages of industrial and technological development (Johnstone, D. Bruce et al., 1998).

Governments have responded to this challenge either on the cost side or on the revenue side, resulting in austerity and impacting the quality and capacity of HE systems, and/or efforts to increase private contributions to financing HE (Johnstone, D. Bruce & Marcucci, 2010). The most common of income-side solutions is cost-sharing, meaning a greater participation of parents & students through tuition fees (most common), and philanthropists through donations (far less common outside of the US). This can take on different forms such as a higher share of tuition-funded study places relative to state-funded places (a so-called *dual-track* model), increases in the volume of tuition, a conversion of grants to loans,

[16] Baumol & Bowen first discussed the problem for the performing arts

co-payments to study-subsidized study places or the creation of a new tuition fee-dependent private sector of higher education. Increases in public (taxpayer) higher education expenditures also happen, although they have usually been time-bound and have focused on supporting certain institutions to achieve certain missions. The most notable of such initiatives were the various "excellence initiatives" to promote research productivity of the strongest universities. Examples include the Chinese 211 and 985 Projects, the South Korean Brain Korea 21 Program, the Japanese Global 30 Project, the French and the German Excellence Initiatives, the Russian Academic Excellence Project 5-100.

As faculty and staff compensations amount generally amount to between 70 and 90 percent of university operating budgets (Johnstone, B., 2015), efforts have been made to lower salaries or move from fixed to variable (and – in average – lower) staff remuneration schemes, substituting lower cost part-time faculty for higher cost full-time faculty or to increasing class sizes and teaching loads (Johnstone, B., 2015). Further institutional cost-reduction strategies, such as deferring maintenance or discontinuing less profitable study programs are also possible, often as decisions taken within expanded financial and operational autonomy of HEIs and the shift from line-item funding to block grants (or lump sums), effectively relegating the task of prioritizing expenses to institutional leaders. The latter has significantly increased as frameworks inspired by New Public Management have spread around the world and have increased the authority of HEI leadership over the deployment of the HEI's resources (and have decreased the rights of staff, be it from tenure, from civil service privileges or union contracts).

In general, the reform agenda in the area of higher education financing since the 1990s can be characterized as an orientation to the market rather than to public ownership or to governmental planning and regulation, ideologically framed by the principles of neo-liberal economics (Johnstone, D. Bruce et al., 1998).

The relevance of financing for the governance of the higher education system

As having sufficient funding to operate is a *conditio sine qua non*, HEI leaders must ensure a steady stream of funding, whatever source it may come from. For the purpose of this dissertation then, financing, or, more concretely, the mechanisms by which funding is distributed are highly relevant as they create powerful incentives for institutional behavior. A number of key questions can help to shed light on this aspect:

- *Which sources do HEIs draw upon to fund their operations?*
- *Who controls the flows of funding that is accessible to HEIs?*
- *Which mechanisms dominate in the distribution of these funds? (market coordination, political, bureaucratic, collegial?)*
- *Who has the authority to control how funding is distributed among the many competing activities and interests within HEIs?*

- *Does HEI the leadership have the authority to employ and fire staff, hire part-time or temporary workers, carry over unspent funds from one fiscal year to the next, shifting available funds from one budget category?*
- *Who controls the "rules of the game" and might potentially intervene?*

These issues will be explored in the case studies and will help to answer the questions on the changing distribution of authority within the governance of the higher education system.

3.2.4 Conclusion: A global model of HE governance?

As these ideas and principles of governance are not only being adopted in the majority of Western European and Anglo-Saxon countries but are also strongly being promoted by international organizations like the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank around the world, it seems legitimate to state that they now constitute a form of „global model of HE governance" dominating the international discourse, if not practice. Summarizing the previously identified trends, the following table displays the characteristics of the global model on four dimensions:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Changes in the relationship between HEIs and the state</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">a shift away from ''state control'' model and towards ''state supervising'' (Van Vught, 1989; Goedegebuure et al., 1993);

steering from a distance" (Marginson, 1997; Meek, V. Lynn et al., 1996) by setting incentives and standards for relatively autonomous HEIs

shift in state influence from ex-ante to ex-post control, with the state focusing on outputs and performance indicators rather than managing inputs, increasing their demands on HEIs for accountability (Neave; 1998; de Boer et al., 2007)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quality Assurance</td><td>Institutional Governance and Autonomy</td><td>Financing higher education</td></tr>
<tr><td>External assessment and control of performance by evaluation and accreditation</td><td>Greater organizational autonomy, discretionary control over collective resources, more clearly defined boundaries to the environment, greater self-perception as an organization, hierarchies and internal management as well as 'rationality' (understood as having defined</td><td>more competitive distribution of funding based on performance measures

decrease of itemized budgets and introduction of global budgets</td></tr>
</table>

	goals and measuring performance) (Braun & Merrien, 1999a; Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Kehm, B. & Lanzendorf, 2006b; Paradeise, 2009) *Greater decision-making power to HEI leadership; Greater power to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff* *Adopting models of corporate governance such as appointment of rectors and presidents by boards rather than through election* *Involvement of external stakeholders in university governance (Sporn, 1999)* *Promotion of strategic planning and strategic management (Braun, 2001)*	*diversification of funding via tuition fees, funding from enterprises, regional authorities*

Table 9: Characteristics of the "global" model of HE governance

The model will be used to determine the degree and direction of convergence vs. divergence vis-à-vis the global model (Research Question 2) and whether there is such a thing as a "Post-Soviet Model" (Research Question 3).

3.3 State of research on the governance of higher education in post-Soviet countries

After having defined and operationalized the concept of governance of higher education systems and having conceptualized a model for change, I will now present available comparative research on the state of governance of higher education in post-Soviet countries.

Figure 9: Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)

For Countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), which are EU Member States or belong to the former Yugoslavia, the attention they have received from EU agencies has resulted in a fairly good base of information. In particular, for the 38 countries participating in the Erasmus+ program[17], data on higher education systems and their governance is regularly researched and updated by the Eurydice network[18], which provides a comprehensive online Encyclopedia on national education systems, as well as specific studies and reports including on topics such as governance, financing, or quality assurance.

While a fairly comprehensive body of research exists on the changes in the governance of HE systems of Western Europe, there is significantly less published research on the governance of higher education in the post-Soviet space. Existing research focusses predominantly on *single countries*, typically in the form of dissertations and research papers by scholars from the countries being described). Most of this research is largely descriptive and is often formulated with a policy setting intention. In their vast majority, these studies take on the shape of commentaries and do not try to methodologically analyse and compare countries. In the following section, I will summarize the existing research that was available at the time of writing of this dissertation.

Data and reports

In contrast to higher education systems in EU Member States, data on the post-Soviet space is far less available. On the level of reports and policy briefs on higher education systems, such are periodically produced by the EU's TEMPUS / Erasmus+ program (Ruffio et al., 2011, 2011; Ruffio, Philippe: Heinämäki, Piia, Tchoukaline, Manthey, & Reichboth, 2011), and, infrequently, by the Higher Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute (HESP/OSI), which is funded by the American

[17] 28 Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey
[18] https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Main_Page

philanthropist George Soros in the early 1990s which is affiliated with the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary (Soros Foundation, 2012). There are also infrequent reports on individual countries by international organizations and foundations such as the OECD series "Reviews of National Policies for Education" on Russia (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development & Centre for Co-operation with Non-members, 1999) and Kazakhstan (World Bank & OECD, 2007). The UNESCO-European Center for Higher Education (CEPES), which had been set up in 1972 in Bucharest, Romania, published a series foundational pieces between the 1990ies and the early 2000ies, such as the Higher Governance in the Soviet Union (Yagodin, G. A., 1990).

Commentaries

Unfortunately, there is only a small number of researchers working on higher education in the former Soviet Union. Those who do typically have affiliations to international organizations active in the region. Among, those, prolific writers include Valdemar Tomusk and Iveta Silova, both former members of the Open Society Foundation, both of which have worked extensively on higher education reforms in Eastern Europe since the 1990ies.

Topics of overview commentaries include highly informative discussions on the inadequacy of competing discourses of modernity and modernization in CEE and the Bologna process in this Central and Eastern Europe (Tomusk, 2008), on myths and realities of Post-Socialist transition (Tomusk, 2006) and on the role of the World Bank in policy reform in CEE (Tomusk, 2002). Stephen Heynemann, and Mark Johnson, who both worked for the World Bank, reflected the impact of the Bank's policy on the post-Soviet higher education and justify it as supporting inevitable and inherently positive developments (Heyneman, 2010, 2011) or challenge their value for the specific context of the former Soviet Union (Johnson, 2008). Nick Clark (2005) discusses differences and commonalities in higher education admission's regimes.

Comparative research

While comparative research on public policy and governance of higher education systems in CEE countries is rare, comparative research on the post-Soviet space is even scarcer. The comparative work which does exist on the region often takes on the form of edited collection of essays with different focuses and methodologies. An example is the book "Globalization on the margins" (Silova, 2011a) which unites a number of essays on higher education reforms in Central Asia. In it, Stephen Heynemann (2011) provides an overview of reforms, noting how policies such as standardized testing for university admission, a move away from sectorial ministerial control, diversification of provision, decentralization of governance are similar across the region. Tomusk provides a commentary on the role of the Bologna Process as an economic and political tool for Europe and Central Asian governments moving Central Asia from the periphery closer to the (European) core (Tomusk, 2011). The first international comparative project encompassing all 15 post-Soviet states was started only in 2015 by the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, with support from the World Bank (Huisman et al., 2018). This project united researchers

from all 15 post-Soviet and several Western countries and will result in a book summarizing the changes in higher education systems, their institutional development and policy changes in each country, following a common framework of vertical and horizontal differentiation.

Systematic comparative work on the governance of higher education systems includes the World Bank report "Higher education in Central Asia: The challenges of modernization" (Brunner & Tillett, 2007) holds case studies from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan and addresses presents an overview of organization (Management), Planning and Regulation of HEIs, Access, opportunities and Equality, Quality and Quality Control, Labour Market and Higher Education, System of Financing HE, Role of HE in Conducting Scientific Research and Innovation Development (R&D), and Globalization and Access to International Market. Next to the individual country case studies, the report also includes a comparative overview of policies and economic indicators.

Dobbins & Khachatryan (2015) compare the changes in the regulatory framework, funding policy, and QA in Georgia and Armenia and show that European integration has had a strong impact on higher education policy and its governance and that these countries are moving (albeit at different speeds) towards ''market-oriented governance''. Todd Drummond and Sergij Gabrscek (2014) analyzed the introduction of higher education admission regimes in Azerbaijan (1992), Uzbekistan (1993), Kazakhstan (1999*), Russia (2001*), Kyrgyzstan (2002), Ukraine (2004*), and Georgia (2005). Silova (Silova, 2011b) summarizes experiments with other models of higher education, which often take place in the form of cooperation with Western (such as the Kazakh-British Technical University or Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan) or Turkish institutions (in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, or Turkmenistan). In many cases, the intensification and scaling-back of such activities reflect the changing geo-political orientations of States and their relationships with Russia, the European Union, Turkey, the United States and the wider world.

In general, however, since the 1990ies, the Soviet model was increasingly thought of "the good old times" (Tomusk, 2008), which, considering the under-funding, lack of adequate infrastructure, and low standards is understandable. This picture gains further strength from in a World Bank study on higher education systems in Central Asia, which could identify no significant changes in the practices of teaching, learning and research or the governance HEIs in Central Asia since the end of the Soviet Union (Brunner & Tillett, 2007).

3.3.1 European Integration in the post-Soviet space

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Central and Eastern European countries such as Russia, the newly independent republics of the Baltics, but also the Caucasus and Central Asia needed to redefine their political, cultural, and economic orientation vis-a-vis each other and the world (Silova, 2011b). Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Baltics states and other EU accession countries participated in a

wide range of EU-funded educational programs, which were specifically designed to help these countries prepare for accession to the EU (e.g., SOCRATES, LEONARDO da VINCI, TEMPUS/TACIS). Together with project funding from foreign governments and private charitable foundations such as the Ford Foundation, the MacArthurs' Foundation, or the Soros Foundation, international organizations are estimated to have spent an amount exceeding half a billion Euros on projects intended to foster and support higher education in transition societies since the break-up of the Socialist block and 2005 (Tomusk, 2006).

The HE systems of post-Soviet countries, just like Western ones, have increasingly become embedded in a transnational environment framed not only by organizations such as the OECD or the World Bank, but in particular, the European Union (Bleiklie, 2001; Martens, Rusconi, & Leuze, 2007). In the countries of Eastern Europe, in 2009, the so-called "Eastern Partnership" was launched with the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, through which these countries received financial additional support for HE reforms to implement the EU architecture of quality assurance, to which they needed to commit. Since the late 2000s, the force of "European Integration" is visibly growing also in Central Asian countries driven by the Bologna Process. In 2007, the EU launched its EU-Central Asia Education Initiative as part of a wider agreement to work together on an interregional basis (Council of the European Union, 2007). This initiative was to combine high-level meetings, technical working groups, national level dialogue with funding for specific activities such as TEMPUS projects, Erasmus Mundus cooperation, events related to promoting the Bologna Process, and projects by the European Training Foundation (EFT) and the Central Asia Research and Education Network (CAREN). Kazakhstan became an official part of the European Higher Education Area in 2010. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and – at least on the rhetorical level Uzbekistan - who, while officially not eligible to join, have started implementing Bologna-related reforms on their own. This Process is supported through different cooperation vehicles with the EU, which has steadily increased its spending on education in the area since the launching of the EU-Central Asia Strategy in 2006. Central Asian countries hope that membership in the Bologna process will improve their reputation and visibility on the world stage, as well as attract more fee-paying students, especially from Asian countries (Jones, P. D., 2011).

The literature's overall assessment of the impact of European Integration on the post-Soviet higher education is mixed. Some experts perceive the public sector reforms undertaken in preparation for EU accession as well as the Bologna Process as particularly powerful factors for the transformation of HE systems in CEE countries (Bouckaert, Nakrošis, & Nemec, 2011; Silova). While the pull of European integration has been shown to have had a strong impact on higher education policy and its governance in countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Romania (Dobbins, 2009), Lithuania, (Dobbins & Leišyte, 2013) and Dobbins and Knill (2009) showed that CEE systems in general are moving (albeit at different speeds) towards ''market-oriented governance'', there remains a large heterogeneity in the governance of post-communist HE systems (Dobbins & Khachatryan, 2015). Tomusk (Tomusk, 2008) argues that, contrary to Central and Southeastern Europe, the Central Asian Republics did

not have an alternative mental model to the Soviet system of higher education, which still represented the primary internal point of reference for reforms. In the post-Soviet states which did not have a highly developed higher education system before the Soviet Union (such as all of Central Asia, the Caucasus and parts of Ukraine), Silova (2011b) noted a more pronounced trend to hold on to, preserve and event re-create Soviet-type educational structures and practices. According to them, although features of the "Post-Socialist Reform package"[19] (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008) have become part of official policy discourse in almost all countries, they are often not implemented in practice (Silova, 2005). Particularly in Central Asia, the "traveling policies" promoted by international organizations are said to have clashed with the desire of policy-makers to maintain Soviet education legacies (Silova, 2011c). Countries like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan may even have come to use the rhetoric of Western education reforms to legitimize their authoritarian regimes and the return to Soviet models in education (Dailey & Silova, 2008; Silova, 2005).

[19] Consisting, among others, of student-centered learning, the introduction of curriculum standards, decentralization of educational finance and governance, privatization of higher education, standardization of student assessment, liberalization of textbook publishing

4 Framework of Analysis and Research Design

4.1 Research Questions and Scope of Analysis

Based on the prior research and the theoretical framework outlined above, the research questions posed at the outset of this study are

RQ 1. How has the governance of higher education systems changed between 1991 and 2015?
RQ 2. ***Is there a convergence towards a "global model" of higher education governance?***
RQ 3. ***Is there a common model of governance of higher education post-Soviet countries?***
RQ 4. ***What was the relative influence of national, regional and global factors on the development of the governance of higher education?***

Table 10: Research Questions (repeated)

As we have seen in the above sections, the issue of governance in higher education is a complex and multi-faceted one. In order to capture the complex nature, any framework of analysis should satisfy three conditions: Firstly, an analytical framework needs to be broad enough to accommodate the large variety of instruments of governance of higher education. Secondly, it needs to be lean enough to be able to describe and analyze developments in a meaningful way that retains their comparability across HE systems. Lastly, it needs to be able to take account of context and the relevant actors who are involved in and drive the changes.

Thematic scope: To satisfy the first requirement, in this dissertation, I will study the governance of higher education systems by analyzing the changes on five dimensions:

1. Educational Standards and Quality Assurance
2. Regulation of Admission to higher education
3. Institutional governance, decision-making and institutional autonomy
4. Financing of higher education
5. Relationship of HEIs to the state

To address the second requirement, I will provide first a historical account of the changes in each country case in chapters 5 through 9. In chapter 10, I will conduct a cross-national comparison and conclusion.

Time scope: The time scope of the study focuses on the changes in the governance of higher education systems during the time frame of 1991-2015.

Geographical scope: The study sets out to retrace the development of governance of higher education systems in those post-Soviet countries, which have joined the Bologna process but are not part of the European Union.

Ivar Bleiklie focuses on both the methodological and conceptual development of international comparative research. In the first part of his article, he develops a typology of five different strategies for international comparative research drawing on previous work by Page (1995), Kogan et al. (2000) and Skocpol (1980): (1) single country studies, (2) juxtapositions, (3) thematic comparisons, (4) identifying causal regularities, and (5) grand theories. My research juxtaposes developments (2) in different post-Soviet countries and conducts a thematic comparison (3) in order to (4) identify causal regularities (with the caveats that causality can only be approximated, not proven).

Due to feasibility constraints, I have chosen three country cases from among the post-Soviet states, which signed the Bologna Declaration but *are not* EU member States. In selecting cases from among the above-mentioned sample, I am following a Most Different Systems Design by picking cases with the greatest possible variability of post-Soviet countries in terms of their population, their economic development, as well as of regional representation. The selection was based on statistical indicators from 2012, the latest complete data of data available from UNESCO and UNDATA. The selection of cases was not only based on theoretical considerations. Russia was chosen owing to its status as the largest post-Soviet state and possibly a model for others. Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian country which is a member of the EHEA. Moldova is the South-Western-Most successor-state of the USSR and its geographical and cultural proximity to Romania, an EU Member State creates an additional transmission vector of institutional change that is worth exploring.

4.2 Research Methodology, Case Study Design, and Data Collection

The present dissertation represents an embedded, multiple-case comparative design (Yin, 2003) by analyzing the changes in instruments and actors engaged in the governance of higher education systems in multiple country cases. The case studies are based on an analysis of various data sources: official statistics, legislation, organizational documents and websites, media publications, and original interviews conducted between in 2015–2017 in Moldova, Russia, and Kazakhstan. Interviewees included top administrators of Universities (from the level of an administrative department head to the university president), current and former Ministerial and government officials, student activists, education researchers, and other experts such as renowned consultants on higher education. To provide anonymity of my interviewees, I will conceal their institutions, names and titles.

4.2.1 Case Studies and data collection

The present study sets out to investigate how has the governance of higher education systems changed ("what"), what the driving forces were for these changes ("why") and how these changes by driven by and changed the relative importance and power of different actors ("who"). Case studies are an adequate research methodology when the main research questions refer to the "how and why" of events, which can still be considered as contemporary (Yin, 2003, p. 5). *"The essence of a case study [..] is that it tries to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and*

with what result" (Schramm, 1971). Case studies as a research strategy are particularly useful where context plays a crucial role and the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

Case studies rely on the triangulation of multiple sources of evidence as well as on theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis in *converging lines of inquiry* (Yin, 2003). The present study is exploratory in nature and therefore does not have specific propositions or prior hypotheses. Rather, it aims at a complete portrayal of the developments in terms of the framework of governance of higher education systems described in chapter 3.1. The following sources of information will be used to develop the case studies.

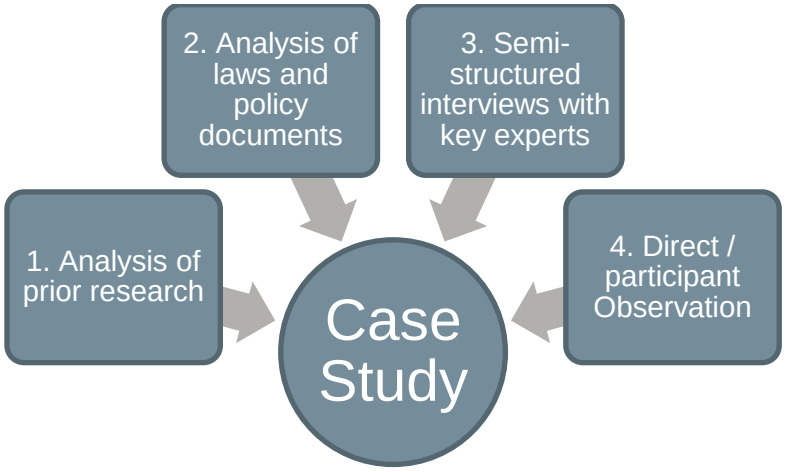

Figure 10: Data sources for case studies

4.2.1.1 Document Analysis: Analyzing prior research, laws, and policy documents

Data from primary sources and secondary data was analyzed for the purpose of this study, most of which was of a qualitative nature. Primary sources, such as legal documents, government white papers, policy recommendations, reports of national advisory bodies and secondary literature such as published academic texts, international studies and reports, and policy-related studies were collected and analyzed. To a degree, although not systematically, I have studied national coverage in national newspapers. I gained access to these documents through online sources, data bases, and direct contacts. Based on the analysis of this data I reconstructed the national policy processes, the evolution of national regulation and developed an initial draft of my understanding of the changes in the overall governance approach.

These preliminary drafts were shared with higher education experts from the respective case countries (e.g. representatives from the Ministries, academics) for confirmation and/or comment. The finalized overviews have formed the basis of information and were used to inform the development of semi-structured interviews. The information collected from document analysis was further used to corroborate the data from semi-structured interviews and to follow-up in case of contradictory information.

4.2.1.2 Semi-Structured Interviews with key experts

Since policy-making is a "messy" process, knowledge about the process is usually privy only to those involved in it. This is why expert interviews form the second essential data source for this study, both for corroborating the information gathered from document analysis, as well as gathering additional information on the process. In order to minimize biases and distortions, experts known to hold different perspectives were deliberately sought out. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Altogether, I conducted 51 expert interviews, 16 in Russia, 13 in Moldova, 22 in Kazakhstan. An overview of conducted interviews is provided in Table 11.

	Russian Federation	Kazakhstan	Moldova
Number of conducted expert interviews	16	22	13
Number of organizational actors covered	9	15	11
HEIs	*Ufa State University; Rossiyskiy Noviy Universitet; Higher School of Economics; Rossiyskiy Universitet Druzhby Narodov*	*Nazarbayev University; Eurasian National University; German-Kazakh University; Ablai Khan University; Narxoz University; Turan University Astana; Turan University Almaty*	*Universitatea Pedagogică de Stat din Moldova; Universitatea Liberă Internațională din Moldova; Ion Creanga State Pedagogical University; Technical University of Moldova; Academia de Studii Economice*
State Institutions	*Ministry of Education and Science; Russian student ombudsman; Rosobrnadzor*	*Ministry of Education and Science; Bologna Process and Mobility Center*	*Ministry of Education; former Direcţia Acreditarea Învăţămînt Superior ; Moldovan Academy of Science; ANACIP; CNEAA; former CNEAA*
Other institutions	*Russian Student Union; National Center for Public Accreditation;*	*European Accreditation Agency; Information-Analytical Center; Kazakhstan's Rectors' Union; IQAA; IAAR; World Bank Office, Kazakhstan*	*National Rectors' Council of Moldova*

Table 11: Expert interviews in the three HE systems

4.2.1.3 Direct observation

Since governance arrangements are not purely historical but play a role in the operation of higher education institutions, direct observation of some components of the governance system is possible. Between June 2016 and August 2017, I have stayed at the Institute of Education at the Higher School of Economics. This has allowed me to attend and observe faculty meetings, as well as meetings of a quality assurance body. Tacit observations from such occasions contributed to a deeper understanding and further refinement of questions for expert interviews.

4.2.2 Comparing the governance of higher education systems and assessing convergence

Previous empirical research done on the role of the state in HE falls into two broad lines (Ferlie et al., 2009): The first focusses on reforms, analyzing their contents and describing the nature of the change they aim at. Such examples include Kaiser et al. (2014) and Teichler (2005). The second line of inquiry falls into the category of implementation analyses which intend to measure the effect of reforms in terms of the quality of change that has taken place. Examples of such kind of studies include Cerych & Sabatier (1986), Kehm and Lanzendorf (2006a), Witte (2006), and de Boer et al. (2007). While previous comparative research has done a lot to describe ongoing phenomena at higher education by focusing on varying aspects of governance, they often do not provide a systematical comparison of the degree and direction of change (Dobbins et al., 2011). In addition, a lot of academic studies, as well as country reviews of educational policies published by international organizations, portray technical and structural trends in higher education systems, without appreciating the historical context, political considerations or issues of power (Padure, 2009b).

In order to make the governance of higher education comparable among countries, Dobbins et al. (2011) put forward a framework of empirically observable dimensions of HE governance and policy change based on those dimensions addressed in the key literature[20] (Clark, B. R., 1983; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; Jongbloed, 2003; Neave, G., 1998, 2003; Olsen, 2007). I a second step, building on Olsen (2007) and Clark (1983), they formulated three ideal types of higher education governance, defined as ‘‘*the market-oriented model’’*, the ‘‘*state centered-model’’* and the ‘‘*academic self-rule model’*. The authors contend, that it the existence of mixed-types is to be expected, such as HE systems, which have evolved into hybrid forms of Humboldt or state-centered and market-oriented governance, which are especially prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe (Dobbins & Knill, 2009) or that different sub-systems may exist in single countries.

[20] The dimensions used by Dobbins et al.(2011) are: *Institutional structures of the university; Patterns of control and quality evaluation; Relations to the state and society; Economic and employer stakeholders; Higher education funding mechanisms; Personnel autonomy; Substantive autonomy*

While initially working with this model, analyzing the degree of convergence of different Higher Education systems to three ideal types of governance models failed to capture the nuances of the post-Soviet models of higher education governance. I therefore reduced the dimensions of comparison to the five categories presented in the following table:

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Relationship between HEIs and the state</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">…</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quality Assurance</td><td>Institutional Governance and Autonomy</td><td>Financing higher education</td></tr>
<tr><td>…</td><td>…</td><td>…</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Regulation of access to HE</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">…</td></tr>
</table>

Table 12: Compared dimensions of governance models

4.2.3 Discussion of validity and reliability of the chosen case study design

Four tests have been commonly used to establish the quality of any empirical social research (Yin, 2003). These include construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. In the following paragraph I will discuss how I have tried to take them into consideration for this research.

Construct validity

Construct validity refers to whether the research adequately represents reality or to what degree the researcher's subjectivity or his choice of data sources distort the results. Case studies which rely to a strong degree on the interpretation of data by the researcher are especially vulnerable to this problem. To address this challenge, Yin (2003) recommends being specific as to what is to be studied, use multiple sources of evidence, and have key informants review the case study drafts. In my dissertation, I have tried to do this by combining document analysis with semi-structured expert interviews, and by triangulating the perspective of various experts who each have their own interests and position in the system. In order to improve construct validity, I have tried to identify the experts with diverging assessments and interests regarding the situation and have discussed my preliminary findings with them.

Internal validity

Internal validity is concerned with causal relationships and thus with explanatory rather than exploratory case studies. Due to the complexity of the research question and the wide scope of time, internal validity is the most challenging aspect of the study. To improve internal validity, I have discussed my reasoning and arguments with a wide variety of experts and at scientific conferences.

External validity

External validity refers to the degree to which the findings in one case can be generalized to others. Lack of external validity is a general problem of case studies due to the – necessarily – small number of cases. While the present study is exploratory in nature and does not aim to develop generalizable theory, the identified factors driving the changes in governance in the case studies may help to develop hypotheses that be tested and verified in other countries by future research projects.

Reliability

The reliability of a research approach lies in its replicability. If, therefore, another researcher was to conduct the same case study, he should arrive at the same results. Even though this goal is theoretical, since repeating an identical case study would be hardly possible for a number of reasons, the reliability criterion is a reminder to minimize researcher biases and errors and to document the procedure in a transparent way as will be done in this study.

4.3 Limitations of the study

The interaction of agencies of different levels, their respective strength, spheres of influence and local embedded structures can help to explain how ideas and concepts travel and get transformed as they are implemented in different contexts. While these developments are challenging to portray in text form. I will try to address this issue as good as possible by choosing a story-telling approach, reconstructing the events, actor interactions and motivations which lead up to the key policy developments, necessarily falling short of both objectivity as well as completeness, but trying my best to strive for both.

A methodological challenge is that the available sources are necessarily biased. Information from expert interviews are retrospective assessments of the years 2015-2017, which are distorted by a) self-serving biases, b) selective memory, c) the specific individual situations in which interviewees were during the time periods discussed, and d) their positions at the time of interviews. In the case of Russia, a particular difficulty emerged because serving government officials were barred from meeting with foreigners without explicit permission from their superiors and, in some cases, the security organs. No current official of either the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, *Rosobrnadzor* or *Rosakredagenstvo* responded to my enquiries for an interview, which meant that I had to rely on recently retired officials for their views. In Moldova and Kazakhstan, I did not encounter such challenges.

5 The Point of Departure: The Soviet Union

5.1 Introduction - Key features of the Soviet Higher Education system

At the center of this study is to reconstruct the developments of governance of higher education systems over the course of 25 years and to analyze to what degree the developments represent a convergence towards a "global model" or a "post-Soviet model". For this purpose, it is indispensable to describe the common point of departure for all post-Soviet higher education systems. This common point of departure is the higher education system and its governance during the period of the Soviet Union. This chapter will portray this system and highlight its key elements.

The Soviet Higher Education system was remarkable for a number of reasons. Looking at its historical development, the speed and scope of its growth in the first half of the 20th century was impressive. The communist project of building a new social structure and converting the backward Russian economy into the most advanced economy in the world required tremendous changes in social, economic, and cultural institutions, a feat which was impossible without a populace that was properly educated and ideologically orientated. Michael David-Fox (2008, p. 75) points to three overlapping agendas when the new system of higher education emerged in the 1930ies: The first, driven by the economic goals was one of industrialization, putting the needs of the economy above other concerns. The second was a "proletarization agenda" focusing on access of previously underprivileged strata, while limiting the influence of nonparty intelligentsija. Linked to the latter, an ideologization agenda aimed at establishing hegemony of party Marxism over rival factions. This agenda produced certain characteristics which impacted the development of the higher education system of the Soviet Union and all of its successor states.

Integrated role for higher education in the planned economy

The Soviet economic development plan executed by the state was the main driving force governing the higher education system. The function of the higher education system was to serve the needs of the national economy, in particular for the "production" of qualified staff, as well as (to a lesser degree) the scientific support to industries and the basic social and economic infrastructure (Kuzminov et al., 2015). As higher education was considered as an integral part of the overall planned economy, this had decisive impact on its governance (Kuzminov et al., 2015). State planning of production volumes in the economy was extended to the number of students, the number of graduates per discipline and the spatial distribution of disciplines across HEIs in the Soviet Union. The planned number of specialists by discipline, in turn, determined the funds available for their training. State control did not end at HEIs though. In the same way that the capacity of the HE system was planned based on the projected needs of the economy, graduates were assigned to jobs for which they had been trained according to the plan (*raspredeleniye*).

Not complying with the government job placement could lead to criminal charges (Froumin, I., Kouzminov, & Semyonov, 2014). In return, companies were required to offer internship placements and allocate some of their funding to contractual research and development conducted in HEIs.

The organizational logic of the Soviet HE system was described by Burton Clark as *"the purest case of the triumph of the state over oligarchical and market interaction"* (Clark, B. R., 1983, p. 142). The HE system was set up to serve the goals of the Soviet planned economy and the social engineering objectives of the state ideology. It was designed to produce 'new people for new society' and was considered and conceived of and organized as a part of the socialist economy. The Soviet economy was to resemble a 'single common factory' (Lenin, 1932) and education was an important part of this machinery. Froumin, Kouzminov & Semyonov (2014) thus also disagree that the essential characteristic was state-control of the HE system per se, but rather that because the state controlled supply and demand for higher education, the Soviet HE system represented a "quasi-corporate" higher education system, not unlike corporate education programs run by large companies. The tight coupling of the HE system to the planned economy allowed massive investments and a fast scaling up of the system: In 1915, the Russian Empire had a total student enrollment of 127,400 compared to 160 million inhabitants. By the beginning of WWII, enrollment has risen to 800,000 and by 1990, to five million students with about 850,000 students graduating annually (Yagodin, G. A., Savelyev, Zuyev, & Galagan, 1990, p. 7). In 1990, there were 896 Soviet HEIs (Avis, 1990).

Compulsory allocation of graduates

As the planned economy, which the higher education system was considered a part of, based the number of study places in certain disciplines and regions upon the predicted number and nature of needed graduates for jobs in the economy, the manpower planning system contained an element of mandatory allocation of graduates to these jobs. Typically, upon graduation, graduates had to work for three years at their assigned place of work.

Political influence

During the 1920ies, significant steps were taken towards opening access to higher education: tuition fees and entrance exams were abolished and families of formerly less-represented classes were given privileged access to HEIs via "workers faculties" that were open to everybody. Democratization and positive discrimination of this type went hand in hand with ideologization. Party-members were placed in teaching and research positions, local Party and Komsomol chapters were opened at every university and party representatives had the right to veto any decision made by the rector or university council and new obligatory subjects such as "The History of the Communist Party," "Marxist-Leninist Philosophy," and "Scientific Communism" were introduced (David-Fox, M., 2008; Zaretskiy, 2012). By the mid-1920s, after universities' opposition to the state control had been broken through purges and arrests of students and professors strict subordination to the government had been reestablished and reinforced

(Chanbarisov, 1988, p. 202). The organizational and academic control over universities made universities highly susceptible to a number of ideological interventions from within the Communist Party (Graham, 1993). Especially in the first half of the 20th century, interventions into teaching and research was most often directed at suppressing intellectual dissent to the basic tenets the State ideology relied upon such as Marxism-Leninism, alleged ‘‘bourgeois nationalism’’ from national minorities, and any attempts of religious or private higher education (Johnson, 2008). The social sciences such history, sociology, political economy, economics, or philosophy were most restricted but during the 1940s and 1950s, political influence was also exerted into areas such as linguistics, botany, and genetics (Jacoby, 1971; Krementsov, 1997).

High specialization and fragmentation

Organizationally, the HE system took on its shape in the 1930ies in an explosion of new HEIs primarily caused by the separation of specialized institutes from comprehensive universities into small separate institutions which were to educate thousands of technicians and engineers, within shorter time frames to work in the industrial sector while more theoretical disciplines and the humanities should be abandoned (Chanbarisov, 1988, 193–194, 197). These “new”, relatively small and highly specialized HEIs were then organized under the jurisdiction of sectoral ministries (in a process called “*otraslirovaniye*”). As a consequence, almost every sectoral ministry had its own specialized universities.

One basic organizational principle of Soviet higher education was the strict separation of elements (Froumin, I. et al., 2014). This included the separation of teaching, which took place at universities and subject-oriented educational institutes, from research, which was organized in a wide array of specialized Industrial research institutes, defense laboratories, and the Academy of Sciences. This arrangement facilitated close coordination and subordination under the economical or national security interests, but left universities bereft of access to the latest research results (Johnson, 2008). For one specific type of HEI, so-called industrial universities, the alignment to the needs of the economy was even closer. These universities were attached to specific factories and qualified students not for a specific function in a specific industry but for a specific role at a particular factory (Ushakov & Shuruyev, 1980, 2014). This led to the coordination between higher education and industry, but also to parallelism, inefficient uses of financial and human resources, and barriers to movement within the system (Johnson, 2008). In 1990, 896 Soviet HEIs fell under the remit of over 70 different organizations (Avis, 1990). This had obvious consequences: Knowledge was scattered. The necessary critical mass for academic excellence was reached but in a few academic centers (mostly in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and specialized military research facilities). While the government made efforts to “rotate” staff from teaching and research facilities to other HEIs and research institutes, the system depended heavily on the state.

Relative isolation

A fear of endangering the legitimacy of the social order and "intellectual contamination" by Western ideas on the one hand, and the important role the defense industry in research and development contributed to a relative isolation of the Soviet HE system from the global scientific community. The defense industry determined the priorities of higher education and research priorities to a considerable degree and related spending accounted for nearly 70% of research funding (Johnson, 2008). Research institutions that were deemed important to national security were often sealed off from all outside contact, some even located in ''closed'' cities to which access was severely restricted (Dezhina & Graham, 2002). Overall, only very few students and staff had the opportunity to work or study outside the Soviet Union. Often travel abroad were given as "prizes" for good service rather than an investment in human capital (Jacoby, 1971, p. 39). Visa for participation in international congresses were granted preferably to older researchers who had already passed the most productive phases of their careers. "Unregulated" international travel for academic purposes was not permitted to researchers and students (Avis, 1990).

5.2 Structure of the HE system

After the October revolution, the Soviet government did a series of quick changes to the scale of HEIs, their number and internal structure. A number of new universities were established in 1918. In 1919, competing departments in several universities were closed as "inefficient duplication of effort" (Kuzminov et al., 2015). Social sciences and humanities departments were merged and more engineering departments were opened. Research laboratories were split from universities and became their own HEIs and new HEIs were being founded at a high pace, while others were being closed down. Two concepts drove the boom in the number of HEIs: *otraslirovanie* meant the dividing up of the entire higher education sector into industrial categories and the subordination of universities under the respective sectoral ministries. *Vtuzirovanie* related the conversion of different institutions of education into (technical) HEIs and the growth of highly specialized industry institutes[21] (David-Fox, M., 2008). As a consequence, between 1929 and 1990s the number of HEIs rose from 152 in 1929 to 579 in 1930 to 701 in 1932 (Chanbarisov, 1988, pp. 193–194). In addition to the expansion of on-site HEIs, part-time and distance education programs were increasingly being offered by correspondence offices at established universities as well as by independent evening and correspondence universities (Kuzminov et al., 2015).

Types of HEIs

As a result of this processes of reorganization, by the 1950ies, a vertically and horizontally differentiated system emerged. By the end of the Soviet Union, higher education was offered by universities, institutes,

[21] Kuzminov, Semenev & Froumin (2015) describe the sometimes bizarre specialized outcomes of this differentiation process, including an "institute of horse breeding", "Institute of Fur Farming", the "Moscow Engineering-Technological Institute of Baking" and others.

academies, factory-sponsored higher technical institutions, and other institutions of higher learning (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 25). Since this formal designation of HEIs masked rather than clarified differences in scope and quality, Froumin, Kouzminov & Semyonov (2014) distinguish the following three main types of HEIs during the Soviet period, a structure that remained in place until well after its demise (Froumin, I. et al., 2014):

1. *Regional infrastructural HEIs*: These were geared to serve regional qualification needs in specific sectors, such as teacher training, medical, polytechnics, etc. They were usually specialized on their field and were clustered around a few regional 'leader' HEIs. These 'leaders' were usually located in the regional capitals and benefited from support from other (research) institutions in the same field.
2. *Specialized industrial HEIs* focused providing qualifications for a specific sector of industry on a national scale (e.g., transport engineering universities or aviation universities in the regions) and for particular factories (enterprises). Like regional infrastructural HEIs, these HEIs were part of a network of similar HEIs associated with methodological and research leaders in their field
3. *Classical (comprehensive) universities* were smaller in number and were responsible to train teaching staff for other HEIs (especially in the basic sciences), staff for research institutes and personnel for local managerial elites (economics, history and law).

It should be mentioned that except for some research activities in classical comprehensive universities the vast majority of HEIs were pure teaching institutions. Research was conducted at the research institutes belonging to the Academy of Science. The following table gives an indication of the quantitative scope of the HE system in 1987:

	Number of HEIs	Number of students enrolled
Universities	69	583,000
Engineering and Technical Institutes	280	2,149,00
Agricultural Institutes	100	520,300
Economics Institutes	52	336,000
Institutes of Law	5	98,000
Medical Institutes	83	311,000
Institutes of Art and Cinematography	61	50,000
Teacher Training Institutes	200	912,000
total	***850***	***4,959,300***

Table 13: HEIs by type and number of students based on Yagodin et al. (1990)

Types of study programs

Participation in higher education was possible in full-time, evening (part-time), and correspondence (distance learning) programs. During the 1987-1988 academic year, 53.2 per cent of the students were enrolled in full-time HE, 11.6 per cent in evening programs (part-time), and 35.2 per cent in correspondence (distance learning) programs (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990).

5.3 The governance of higher education in the Soviet Union

5.3.1 Actors and their capabilities

5.3.1.1 The State Planning Committee – Gosplan

The State Planning Committee (*Gosplan*) was the agency responsible for centralized economic planning in the Soviet Union. Its main responsibility was the creation and administration of five-year plans governing the economy of the USSR on the basis of which finances were made available to branch ministries in the form of itemized budgets. In this function, it was of central importance for resource allocation and the overall size of the HE sector.

5.3.1.2 Ministry of Education and Branch Ministries

HEIs were subordinated to and financed by different « branch ministries » depending on their specialization. The ministry of education created overall rules and a model university charter as a sample for individual universities and oversaw the development of curricula and the publishing of authorized university textbooks.

5.3.1.3 Higher Attestation Commission (*Vysshaya attestatsionnaya komissiya* – VAK).

The VAK was the government agency responsible for overseeing and regulating the awarding of advanced academic degrees. Its responsibilities included the coordination of the Dissertation Councils (*dissertatsionnyy sovet*) which were set up in all Russian universities and research institutes, promote the regulations concerning awarding of academic degrees; award the degrees of Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences (upon the recommendation of the Dissertation Council in the university or research institute where the defense of the dissertation took place); and make decisions on the equivalence of foreign degrees awarded to Russian citizens. Until 1987 the VAK also was responsible to assign the titles of professor and assistant professor to teaching staff at HEIs. Since 1987, these responsibilities were transferred to the State Committee for Public Education or, in some cases, to the universities themselves (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 54).

5.3.1.4 Professional Unions (*profsoyuzy)* and *Komsomol*

Since the 1930ies, student participation in university governance had been limited. It was organized either in the form of narrowly industry-related professional student unions (profsoyuzy) who lobbied

for welfare benefits like food, housing, vacations and scholarships for their members, and the youth organization of the Communist Party, the Komsomol, which ideologically prepared students for roles in party and state but also organized social and sporting events and socially beneficial activities like student construction teams (*stroiotryady*). Their internal governance structures were strongly hierarchic, with leaders often not being students but Civil Servants. Students had no say in the academic governance of the university (Chirikov & Gruzdev, 2014). The structure of *profsoyuzy* and the *Komsomol* was almost identical all over the Soviet Union and they represented the only way to receive government welfare as a student (Chirikov & Gruzdev, 2014). This dual model operated until the end of the 1980s when the Komsomol was disbanded although *profsoyuzy* continued to exist in many post-soviet countries.

5.3.2 Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

According to Kouptsov & Tatur (2001) the quality assurance system of the Soviet Union rested on five pillars. These were 1. professional qualification requirements, 2. standard course programs, 3. the qualification and attestation of academic staff, 4. state final certifications of graduates and 5. periodic evaluations and controls by ministry commissions and other state agencies.

5.3.2.1 Professional qualification requirements

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR formulated ideological and ethical qualities that graduates of higher education should meet (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). These intended outcomes of higher education were complemented by norms of the USSR ministries, such as the Ministries of Labor, Agriculture, Transport, Communication, or Public Health, which described in great detail, knowledge and skills criteria, which an applicant should meet for employment. These requirements served the orientation point for HEIs to develop their study programs. Since 1982, these intended learning outcomes were specified for each "specialty" (study program) in a set of over 400 standards (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). These standards included minimum requirements for the professional knowledge and a description of the kinds of problems graduates should be able to solve.

5.3.2.2 Standard study plans

In the Soviet Union, the contents of educational programs were centrally defined by Ministry working groups to which leading researchers were appointed by the Ministry and – since 1987 - by so-called academic and methodological councils of HEIs engaged in that field of training. These councils developed standards course programs ("study plans"), curricula, and even fieldwork for each specialty (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). These standard programs were adopted by the USSR Ministry of Higher Education and were mandatory for all HEIs in the USSR. Individual HEIs had the freedom to change

up to five per cent of the contents or to change the ratio of academic hours devoted to the study of individual sections of disciplines (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). Course programs, textbooks and instructional materials were regularly updated every five to six years. In this sense, teaching staff in the periphery had a quite small degree of autonomy while the most renowned academics had considerable influence upon what would be taught all over the country. As one former rector remembers:

> *"There was a book […] which was called "higher school of USSR" […]. In it, there were all study plans of all specialties which existed at the time. Now of course there are significantly more. […] In a study plan, there was defined how many hours, let's say, for this or that subject. Which subject should be studied in which semester. How many practical, how many laboratory, how many theoretical teaching hours there should be, etc. Everything was described and according to this plan everybody studied, beginning in Vladivostok and ending in Moldova or the Baltics. […] Later, when the Soviet Union collapsed, they gave us freedom and there was freedom, and everybody did what they wanted. And this was an ugly mess. In this "whatever they want" called for the establishment of a system to limit and orientate the direction of development for HEIs" (Interview MD No. 12, 2016)*

There were a very limited number of textbooks for subjects which were in use in all such programs in the Soviet Union, which further added to the uniformity of study programs. The benefits of the highly centralized Soviet plan are clear in reminiscences of older academics:

> *There was academic mobility: A student from the (Russian) Far East could move to the westernmost city in Kaliningrad and they would teach him fishery without difficulties. […] The most important thing that I now understand is that this was the optimal time saver for HEIs: The HEI received a ready study plan, it did not have to break their heads because the study plans were prepared on the basis of the qualification requirements of the ministry […] Specialists had prepared it in advance, the greatest specialist: Members of the academy of sciences, scholars from the academy of science, leading professors – they make the study programs amazing programs, and the HEI received a ready program. […] But today, the HEI draws is all up themselves and we just suffocate in paperwork. […] Now nothing is regulated anymore and every HEI fantasizes by itself." (Interview RU No. 5, 2015)*

5.3.2.3 Qualification and attestation of academic staff

An important milestone in academics careers was the completion of doctoral studies (*aspirantura*) after which aspirants were awarded the "Candidate of Sciences" degree (*kandidat nauk*). Doctoral studies consisted of research work as well as compulsory pedagogical training. Doctoral theses had to be submitted to the Higher Attestation Commission (VAK). The VAK controlled the awarding of advanced academic degrees and academic ranks in all of the USSR. Academics had to submit their theses and apply for recognition of their degrees and academic titles which specialized committees of academics

within the VAK verified and accepted or rejected. To update the academic and didactical competences of teaching staff, *Advanced Training Institutes* for university teachers offered pedagogical training. Once every five years university teachers could choose to participate in these trainings or opt for research or practical training at research institutes or enterprises at their average monthly salaries for up to three months (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001).

5.3.2.4 State Final Certification

At the end of their studies, students were assessed by the *State Examination Commissions*. These commissions were composed of internal as well as external professors as well as representatives of other concerned organizations, such as firms, enterprises, or factories that employed graduates in the relevant specialty (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001).

5.3.2.5 Evaluations by the State Inspectorate of Higher Education Institutions

In 1967, the State Inspectorate of Higher Education Institutions was founded within the USSR Ministry of Higher Education. HEIs were submitted to periodical assessment of their compliance with state standards. These assessments verified HEIs adherence to the centrally mandated processes (e.g. lesson plans, documentation, study plans, study programs, etc.). The inspectorate could conduct evaluations of individual HEIs, to the verify compliance with state regulations. These evaluations were carried out by groups of experts in the field in question and their reports highlighted shortcomings and formulated recommendation.

5.3.3 Regulation of admission into higher education

At the beginning of the Soviet experiment, in order to promote access of formerly disenfranchised classes of workers and peasants to higher education, all entrance examinations were canceled by decree of the Soviet government in 1918.

Student numbers grew rapidly but the Soviet government eventually understood that the new students, many of whom had until recently been illiterate, were badly wanting of the basic requirements needed to succeed in higher education. The opening so called “workers’ departments” (*rabfak*), was indented to get young workers and peasants to the minimum level of literacy in order to study at university, which did change the social composition of the student body. While workers’ departments were abolished before World War II, though they were revived in 1961 in the form of preparatory departments (Kuzminov et al., 2015).

Between 1921 and 1936, the class principle of student admissions was introduced to limit the number of students from “socially and politically alien” (=bourgeois) elements.

Since the 1950ies, access to HE was limited by the requirement of having successfully completed secondary general education as well as on passing an admission selection process. The admissions process

involved a single application by students to a single university, travel on-site, and admissions exams developed by the university, sometimes accompanied by oral exams (Clark, N., 2005). According to Jacoby (1971), this test consisted of written entrance examinations conducted by the university departments to which they had applied. The requirements varied depending on the field of study but generally admittance was granted to those applicants scoring highest on a competitive entrance examination, although good school grades, extracurricular activities and membership in party organizations such as the Komsomol, having working experience, and being children of peasants and blue-collar workers also played a role in admission. Winners of science competitions could sometimes enter HEIs without having to pass an entrance examination (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 36). In actual reality, HEIs likely had a large degree of influence over which students they accepted. In addition, access to agricultural and medical institutes was open to applicants with relevant work experience in these fields. The central government would monitor the quotas of which students were admitted and a trust in the fairness of the system was usually given (Winter, 2014). The detailed procedures and criteria for these entrance examinations were regulated at the Union-level (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 36), although the actual weighing of these criteria was described as rather nontransparent by Jacoby (1971, p. 36). Already in the 1960ies, corruption was reported in the university admission process. Jacoby (1971, p. 37) describes tutoring rackets with access to admission test questions and outright bribery at the admissions' office themselves.

5.3.4 Institutional governance, decision-making and institutional autonomy

Prior to the October Revolution, Russian universities had had relatively individualized statutes and while government and university management had long tried to suppress any form of participatory governance, the free expression of political opinion or even freedom of assembly (Chirikov & Gruzdev, 2014), universities had had relatively individualized statutes. Between 1921 and the mid-1930ies, a strict form of control with a high degree of centralization and party-control of all aspects, including the organization and the contents of the curriculum was put into place (David-Fox, M. & Peteri, 2008). In 1928, the Supreme Council of National Economy of the USSR created a General Directorate of Higher and Secondary Technical Schools (*Glavvtuz*), which, in order align HEIs closer with the needs of the planned economy, transferred their oversight to the respective people's commissariats (ministries) and departments: Many ministries such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Railways (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 30) maintained and supervised their own specialized HEIs which were supervised by them. In order to create some degree of uniform standards, the People's Commissariat for Education (later: Ministry of Education) was tasked with methodical and didactical support of all HEIs, as well as with the oversight of teaching and artistic HEIs and (comprehensive) universities.

The higher education system was thus treated as any other state-owned enterprises within the confines of the Soviet command administrative economy which resulted in a rather limited institutional auton-

omy. University rectors were appointed by the respective Federal Ministry to whom they were responsible for the implementation of the central plans. The number of students by specialty (major) was determined by the respective branch ministry in coordination with the State Planning Committee (Gosplan). Organizational changes, such as creating a new chair or department required consultation with and approval from the Ministry.

However, in the late 1980ies, the link between HE and the actual needs of industry was perceived to be insufficient. While by the end of 1987, 500 branches HEI departments had been established in various enterprises, Yagodin et al. (1990, p. 15) criticize that only one percent of the total number of departments of HEIs in the USSR maintained such links, which the authors see crucial for a better integration between HE and industry.

5.3.5 Financing of HEIs

Prior to 1987, funding to HEIs was allocated according to the overall State plan formulated by "Gosplan", the State Planning Commission of the USSR. Funding was calculated according to a number of factors. Finances were made available exclusively by the respective branch ministry in the form of itemized budgets. Universities (as opposed to institutes and academies), most of which were located in the capitals of Soviet republics, were funded by the national budget and their staff received higher salaries. All other HEIs in the Soviet Union were divided into three categories (1st, 2nd, 3rd), which directly related to their level of funding. The biggest set of expenses were salaries for teaching and service staff which were remunerated according to government-determined rates. The number of staff members, in turn, depended on the planned number of students. The second-largest item of expenditure were the stipends paid out to students enrolled on the state budget. Thirdly, HEIs received additional subsidies for research equipment and construction. The funding of these HEIs depended on the finances their branch ministries could provide. HEIs related to military research and development were thus generally better funded, had better infrastructure and could pay bonuses to (generally centrally tariff-bound and seniority-oriented) staff salaries. There was rather little transparency in this matter.

Central control over the State's resources undoubtedly helped the rapid expansion of the Soviet HE system. The creation and rapid expansion of "worker faculties" in the 1920ies (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 10) or the rapid expansion of correspondence education (*zaochnoye obucheniye*) programs were arguably only possible because opening a new HEI or program could be mandated centrally (Johnson, 2008; Rosen, 1963). In another example, the deficit of professors and qualified scientific personnel to train engineers in the Eastern regions of the USSR was addressed by setting up "science cities" (*naukograd*y) in Novosibirsk, Irkutsk, Kemerovo, and elsewhere (Rosen, 1963). Likewise, a system of didactical and research exchanges was established centrally between HEIs within the USSR and abroad, to disseminate knowledge and research findings.

In 1987 it was decided that central planning would be eased and the financing of HEIs should be routed via direct contracts between businesses and HEIs, research contracts in addition to state funding for the training of a certain number of students. Centralized financing of HE by the State was foreseen to be limited to the social and cultural spheres as well as to certain strategic fields of scientific and technical development (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 65). In all other fields, companies and other organizations were to take over the financing of HE of future employees.

5.4 The HE Reforms of 1987

The issue of insufficient quality in education and in manufacturing was heavily debated during the 1980ies in the Soviet Union. The first conferences on the management of educational quality were organized in the early 1980ies (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). In the last years of the Soviet Union (1986-1991), "*the quality of education became the core issue of educational policy*" (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). Avis (1990) argues that the key problem resulted from shortcomings of central planning: Political priorities favored the number of graduates over the quality of their education, which was conducted by under-funded HEIs which lacked properly equipped laboratories and relied mostly on formal lecture-course-style didactics. On a more fundamental note, the central planning of educational capacity systematically overestimated real demand and the mandatory placement of graduates to secure jobs created little incentive for genuine motivation for their professional studies.

In 1987, the final edition of the "Basic Guidelines on the Restructuring of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education" was published in Pravda of 21 March 1987. They contained a number of fundamental changes to the contents, forms of delivery and the governance of the Soviet HE system. The overarching aim was to improve the quality and the relevance of higher education. The Guidelines foresaw a number of changes to the organization of higher education in the Soviet Union:

Foundation of State Committee for Public Education of the USSR

At the State level, the Ministry of Education of the USSR and the State Committees for Vocational Training and Technical Education of the USSR were abolished and replaced by a new State Committee for Public Education of the USSR (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 14). Among its tasks were the formulation of a uniform policy for the quality of education, a strategy for the development of HE and to provide guidance of sectoral HEIs (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 30). In addition, in 1988, a special "*All-Union Council for Public Education*" was formed as an advisory body for the development of public education.

The State Committee for Public Education proposed to fundamentally change the internal governance of HEIs, most notably introduce the election of rectors[22], and defined the powers of vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans as well as various HEI councils (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 33).

Integration of HEIs through regional centers for higher education

13 regional centers for higher education were established in the USSR[23] in order to improve the intra-regional coordination of HE activities. These centers were intended to coordinate the activities of all HEIs in the regions, regardless of the branch ministries they were subordinated to. The activities of the regional centers were to be determined "on a democratic basis" by the council of rectors of the higher education institutions of a given region (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 31).

Educational and methodological associations

As part of the 1986-87 reforms, the idea of university autonomy was strengthened. The definition of curricular contents was decentralized through the creation of several "educational and methodological associations". These associations were grouped around disciplinary specialties and were funded by the HEIs involved in training of specialists in those domains (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 31). The task of the associations was to improve didactics, link teaching closer to research and to the needs of industry. The associations themselves were to be supervised by special councils made up of the "rectors […], leading professors […], distinguished specialists employed in the national economy" (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 31). The associations were established both along disciplinary ("e.g. engineering education" as well as regional lines ("HEI of the city of Moscow).

Integration of HEIs through UNPKs, SECs, and MNTKs

HEIs were asked to improve their link to industry via branches, the formation of "Educational, Scientific, and Industrial Complexes" (UNPKs), "Scientific and Educational Centers" (SECs), "intersectorial and interdisciplinary higher education-industry", and "scientific-technical complexes attached to higher education institutions" (MNTK) (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990). As an incentive not to overstate their staffing and training needs, enterprises were asked to financially contribute to the training of specialists at HEIs which, in 1990, had already borne some fruits (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 19).

Quality Assessment of HEIs

At the level of individual HEIs, a review process was started. All HEIs should be visited by state inspectors who published detailed appraisals of their work (Avis, 1990). As a result of these inspections, those HEIs that were not found satisfactory were to be warned, faced repeat inspection or were closed down

[22] As a result of perestroika, HEIs were allowed to elect their own rectors since 1987 as determined by the "statute of elections of rectors of higher education institutions"

[23] Regional Centers were established in Moscow, Leningrad, Minsk, Kiev, Rostov, Dnepropetrovsk, Chelyabinsk, Tomsk, Penza, Voronezh, Sverdlovsk, Kharkov, and Gomel

or merged with other institutions (Vestnik Vysshei Shkoly, 1988a, 1988b). The reforms intended to broaden the curricula, diversify and individualize teaching methods, cut the number of students admitted to HE and creating additional incentives for high-performing students. On the other hand, they introduced stricter student assessment and removed incentives to graduate students regardless of their performance. In HEIs annual assessments of teaching staff by students was to be introduced, with consequences for salaries and jobs, which were to be distributed in open competitions every five years.

Prior to the 1980ies, there had been little to no experience with external assessment of educational institutions, so examples from other countries, most prominently USA and Great Britain were studied and taken into account (Interview RU No. 3, 2015).

Competitive Recruitment of Staff Members

Until 1987, HEI staff serving in academic positions (such as department heads, professors, assistant professors, senior teachers, and assistant lecturers) could continue their employment without a competitive assessment of their performance. Since 1987 these contracts had to be re-announced on a yearly basis (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 55).

Greater institutional autonomy

A significant step towards institutional autonomy of HEIs was the decision that every HEI should be governed by to its own charter (Beliakov, Lugachyov, & Markov, 1999). The guidelines for these charters included the provision that rectors were to be elected by university academic councils or senates rather than directly appointed by the Ministry.

Unified list of study programs

The offer of possible study programs was regulated by the responsible ministries via lists of specializations. The contents of curricula as well as syllabi were defined at the Union level and specified the content and the sequence of all courses for each study program offered within the Soviet Union (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 41). The standards were very detailed and included provisions detailing the number of teaching hours foreseen for groups of individual subjects, individual projects, the different types of classes (lectures, seminars, laboratory work, practical work, etc.), and the numbers of tests, and examinations They determined the order of courses which were grouped in “general education subjects” (fundamental sciences and humanities), “general professional subjects” (fundamental subjects relevant for the discipline or profession), and “specific subjects” (courses on specific current issues of the profession).

A certain amount of teaching hours was left at the discretion of the individual institutions who were expected to allocate them in coordination with the needs of particular employers’ or regional needs.

Model curricula

Curricula had become highly specific with specializations such as “locomotive-building”, “the technology of transport machine-building and repair the rolling stock”, and “diesel-locomotives and the diesel-

locomotive industry" existing as separate study programs (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 41). The parallelism of ministries resulted in considerable duplication and overlap as well as likely a high degree of non-transparency for students and employers. As part of the 1987 reforms, a list of 300 specializations was defined which considerably reduced the previous list. In additional HEIs could develop "model curricula" which had to be submitted to and approved by the State Committee for Public Education of the USSR as well as by the ministries and departments involved (Yagodin, G. A. et al., 1990, p. 43).

The 1986-87 reforms certainly marked a clear distancing from orthodox ideas about the organization of both the economy as well as the higher education system, which suffered from growing inefficiency caused by the rigidities of the Soviet public administration system. In the end, however, while ambitious, the reforms failed to be widely implemented and have a significant effect on universities before the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 (Zaretskiy, 2012).

5.5 The break-up and transition of the Soviet higher education system

After a series of crises and reforms, the declaration of independence of the Baltic States, and a putsch of senior officials against Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin, who had become the first directly elected President in Russian history, arrested the putschists after three days, banned the Soviet Communist Party in Russia and seized its assets. By recognizing the independence of the Baltic republics and declaring Russia itself as independent of the Soviet Union, the Union itself de facto ceased to exist and was officially dissolved on December 26, 1991 by the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union. As a consequence, 15 countries gained their independence, some voluntarily (Georgia, Moldavia, Belarus, the Baltic States, Russia and Ukraine) and some involuntarily (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan).

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the victory of the "Western values" of liberal democracy and capitalism was celebrated in political as well as academic circles. Francis Fukuyama (1992) famously argued that the advent of Western liberal democracy was not only inevitable but signaled the endpoint of humanity's sociocultural evolution and the final form of human government. At the surface, during the first years of independence this seemed to be indeed happening, as governments across the former "Socialist block" revised their constitutions, laws and policies pronouncing market economy, democratic pluralism and the respect for human right as the pillars of their new institutional fabric. Expectations of the future were rosy. Enthusiastic proponents of free markets expected that over the course of a year or two, the countries' economies, freed from the shackles of central planning, were to enter an unprecedented economic boom.

Reality, however, set it rather quickly. The breakup of the Soviet Union had brought countries into being which never existed as independent entities and which had close to no experience in self-governance. As the old planned economies ceased to exist, and the expected "blooming countrysides" failed to materialize, supplier-relationships ceased to function, economies crashed, and unemployment skyrocketed.

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought about dramatic changes eroding the economical basis for reforms (Linn, 2004):

- collapse of the integrated payments system and formal and informal inter-enterprise links
- end of budgetary and investment subsidies from Moscow
- Price support or subsidies, such as energy, eliminated
- Formal customs and trade barriers introduced
- Transport prices raised and transport services re-oriented, particularly the regularity of air and rail services
- Integrated power grids, including water systems, collapsed
- Migration of ethnic Russians from the new republics to Russia
- Collapse of Union security framework without replacement

The reality for the vast majority of the populations was grim. While the transition did lift the "slavery of communism", for most it was replaced by the "unfreedom" of poverty (Tomusk, 2006). The new countries were faced with a "triple transition" (Offe & Adler, 1991), as they had to simultaneously cope with democratization, establishing a market economy, and state- and nation-building. On a whole, assuring the immediate physical needs of the population took a priority before developing the education system. For higher education, this ''simultaneous transformation'' meant having to transform higher education systems at the same time as moving from a planned to a market economy. Policy choices added to the challenge: In the early 1990ies, state funding for higher education was abruptly cut. At the same time, economic enterprises were chaotically privatized. In this situation, universities not only struggled with the same issues of underfunding, lacking transparency and international competitiveness as did their Western European neighbors (Neave 2003: 20), but also with rapidly contracting public budgets, inflation, an often-precarious socio-economic condition, and political instability.

In many post-Soviet States, where ethnic identity had played an important role in their struggles for independence and the education policy of the first post-independence years was dominated more by the goal restoring of the place of national languages in the educational system ahead of considerations of quality, funding, and sustainability.

Common developments in Post-Socialist higher education

Under these conditions, HEIs needed to assure their own survival, liberate themselves from ideological control, develop new or restore old organizational forms, as well as coping with the rapidly expanding private HE sector (Dobbins & Khachatryan, 2015). Those countries, where there had been a tradition of higher education, such as in Central, Northern and South-Eastern Europe, tried to get rid of the heritage of their socialist higher education systems (Tomusk, 2004) reestablish their pre-war cultural legacy of democratic, academic self-rule and research-oriented universities (Dobbins & Khachatryan, 2015; Padure, 2009b). Most successor countries of the former Soviet Union, however, had only developed a

noteworthy higher education system after the October Revolution (Bischof & Tofan, 2018; Padure, 2009b), which made a "return" to a supposed status ex-ante impossible.

The lack of institutional autonomy and professional networks had left higher education unprepared for the disappearance of central coordination by the State. While the old components of systems were often thrown into disarray, entrepreneurial actors seized the moment. The lack of the public resources necessary for sustaining and reinventing the HE system and the disappearance of oversight and accountability mechanisms opened the doors to corruption. In the legislative vacuum in most post-Soviet States, entreneurial professors and businessmen created new public and private their own universities, ranging from a few legitimate high-quality universities[24] to an array of under-regulated legal and business ''academies,'' as well as blatantly commercial and often low-quality ''affiliates'' (*filialy*) of public and private universities across the region. Cuts to state funding for higher education and market liberalization led to a mushrooming of private higher education virtually in all Post-Socialist countries. The absence of the State and mechanisms for political accountability further contributed to corruption and an erosion of standards.

Some authors even argue that because of run-away massification, under-funding, semi-privatization, growing corruption, brain-drain and over-aging of the impoverished academia faculty, the knowledge taught in higher education has become increasingly outdated and has all but lost its function to create new knowledge or develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in its students (Tomusk, 2006). Instead, according to Tomusk, in many countries higher education has become primarily a social institution, re-creating social order and societal hierarchies, devaluating the content of higher education credentials and leading to a sell-off of dubious certificates by impoverished academics or private higher education entrepreneurs. On the other hand, new high quality HEIs did appear as well, mostly in the capitals and major urban centers[25]. Demand for new curricular content in economics, law, business, religious studies, history, and sociology created a boom for such study programs and faculties and the new universities were also often the first to pioneer "new" curricular contents, which under the Soviet system of higher education had not existed. The lack of state funding, however, led to plunging salaries and the chronic inability of higher education or research institutions to afford the purchase of publications or new equipment. This not only forced many public HEIs to seek out new sources of funding

[24] Among them, such institutions as the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, the European University of St. Petersburg, and the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences in Russia; Khazar University in Azerbaijan; the American University of Armenia; the Kyrgyz- Turkish Manas University and the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, the Russian State Humanities University and the State University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, the University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Ukraine, and the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research.

[25] Examples include the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, the European University of St. Petersburg, the Khazar University in Azerbaijan; or the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Ukraine, or the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research

(typically through the introduction of tuition fees). While some academics stayed on, under-funding and opportunity led to a large scale ‘‘brain drain’’ out of the profession and out of the country.

Johnson (2008) argues that the structure of the Soviet system of HE, its close integration with professional and economic spheres in particular regions and industries, its reliance on state funding and cooperation with other HEIs and industries in the planned-economy system of the Soviet Union left it particularly exposed to the dramatic changes the collapse of this system caused. When the system collapsed, the Soviet-era separation of teaching, research, and advanced professional training into different organizations which were governed by different branch ministries left them without a coordinating mechanism when central coordination by the State suddenly ceased to function. Johnson (2008) argues that the ideal of “pure” (basic) research, which was deeply rooted in the Academy of Science research institutes, and a general bias towards theoretical, rather than applied research additionally may have represented additional obstacles to using new ways to conduct research, exploiting economic and technological innovation (Schweitzer, 2000) or implementing new approaches to higher education management, which HEIs without the means to proactively address the challenges the new environment represented for them. The prior lack of institutional autonomy and proactiveness in establishing, maintaining and coordinating inter-institutional relationships made it difficult for HEIs to take over the coordinating functions so suddenly abandoned by the State. The reforms thus dismembered a highly integrated and (relatively) functional HE system, without warning and without a deeper understanding of what was coming.

The macro-context of the political-economic system influences the values and capacities needed for successful governance of higher education. As a report by the World Bank and the OECD (2007) highlights:

> *“If a planned economy required from HEIs the management capacity to achieve the goals set for them from the outside, a market economy required the capacity to set their own goals and to achieve them. If a planned economy required a culture of compliance from HEIs, a market economy required initiatives from them. If, in a planned economy, HEIs received resources to deliver the goals set by the government, in a market economy HEIs were also responsible for mobilizing the resources to meet the goals set by themselves. If, in an authoritarian political regime, HEIs have been tightly controlled by administrative authorities, an open society requires more autonomy, accompanied by accountability to all stakeholders including students, teachers and employers” (World Bank & OECD, 2007)*

Without doubt, the end of the Soviet Higher Education system, also brought opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, scholars and students across the former Soviet Union were able to travel more freely. They were free from explicit censorship and a whole array of new international exchanges and grant programs appeared from which the more entrepreneurial and internationally-minded could profit for research and study mobility. In general, however, well-intentioned as they may have been, the policy intentions of the early 1990s were “*were so wildly beyond the capacity of the post-Soviet systems*

to implement that they constituted a sort of academic (and public policy) malpractice“ (Johnson, 2008).

6 The Russian Federation

6.1 Introduction

The Russian Federation became the official successor State of the Soviet Union in 1991. It represented the core and the heart of the Russian Empire as of the Soviet Union. Even after independence, Russia remained the world's largest country by area, covering more than one-eighth of the Earth's inhabited land area. In 2015, Russia's total population was 144,096,000. In 2015, the Russian economy ranked as the twelfth largest by nominal GDP. The State language is Russian. In several regions, different minority languages also have official status. Within the post-Soviet Space, the territory of the Russian Federation (along with Ukraine) had been the seat of the first pre-revolutionary universities and it hosts on its territory the largest number and most significant of universities and research institutions.

6.2 The development of the governance of the higher education system in Russia

Electoral period	*President's Party/Coalition*	*President*	*Prime Minister(s)*	*Minister(s) of Education (Since 2004: Education and Science)*
1991-1999	Independent; Our Home-Russia; Fatherland-All Russia, Unity	Boris Yeltsin	Boris Yelstin (91-92) Yegor Gaidar (92) Viktor Chernomyrdin (92-98) Sergey Kiriyenko (98) Viktor Chernomyrdin (98) Yevgeny Primakov (98-99) Sergey Stepashin (99) Vladimir Putin (99)	Boris Saltykov (91-92) Evgeniy Tkachenko (92) Vladimir Kinelev (96-98) Alexander Tikhonov (1998) Vladimir Filippov (1998-)
1999-2008	Unity, Independent	Vladimir Putin	Mikhail Kasyanov (00-04) Mikhail Fradkov (04-07) Viktor Zubkov (07-08)	Vladimir Filippov (-2004) Andrey Fursenko (2004-2008)
2008-2012	United Russia	Dmitry Medvedev	Vladimir Putin (08-12)	Andrey Fursenko (2008-2012)

2012-2017	United Russia	Vladimir Putin	Dmitry Medvedev (12-17)	Dmitry Livanov (2012-2016 Olga Vasilyeva (2016-

Table 14: Overview of ruling parties and cabinets in the Russian Federation 1991-2017

6.2.1 De-regulation and marketization of higher education (1991-2000)

The changes in governance of higher education of the 1990ies can be characterized with the terms de-centralization, liberalization and marketization (Adrian et al., 2000; Bain, O. B., 2003). The proclaimed goals of democratization and the establishment of a market economy in post-Soviet Russia quickly made itself feel in the educational sphere. Marxism as the official ideology was renounced immediately and universities replaced the compulsory Marxist subjects with presumably non-ideological substitutes.

Partially in response to the budgetary crisis, and partially due to the market-liberal ideology of the early 1990ies, the government assumed a laisser-faire attitude towards the regulation of the HE system. Two laws, "*On Education*" (1992) and "*On Higher and Postgraduate Education*" (1996) established a new, market-liberal framework of higher education. The increase in university autonomy compared to the Soviet era was enormous. The government let go of a lot of regulation and micro-management of HEIs. If, during Soviet times, the State had controlled the operations of all HEIs to a deep level, the State defined the contents, the structure, the salary, the nomination of rectors and other key personnel, then the 1992 and 1996 laws brought unprecedented autonomy to Russian HEIs: While curriculum autonomy was still rather limited by relatively rigid State Standards, although unlike as during Soviet times, as HEIs now had the freedom so use any textbook they liked. HEIs received the right to enroll students on a tuition-fee basis and to open new study programs. The opportunity to generate their own money represented one of the most significant departure from the Soviet governance framework (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). Educational institutions, among them HEIs, received considerable financial autonomy from the state. They were permitted to engage in entrepreneurial activity and to reinvest possible revenues even into areas not directly related to their educational mission (Beliakov et al., 1999). As the state withdrew considerably from financing higher education, the Soviet-system of predetermined staff tariffs depending on seniority, function and academic degrees could not be maintained any more. HEIs became free to define their internal organization, to employ their own staff and set their own salaries, to rent and lease assets, and to establish new legal such as branches (Beliakov et al., 1999) and even to change their status from institute to academy or university. Because of the budget contractions, during the 1990ies, the majority of HEIs used their new organizational autonomy mainly for economic survival, rather than for innovation (Interview RU No. 9, 2017).

One of the most significant changes regarding the governance of HEIs was that rectors were now elected by academic councils (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). While formally corresponding to western models of academic self-governance, in fact, this arrangement gave rectors a significant degree of power, because

the internal governance of HEIs did not change. Since rectors ex-officio chair academic councils and other ex-officio members such as vice-rectors, and directors of institutes are nominated by the rector, the rector controls the agenda for meetings and dominates the decision making-process (Beliakov et al., 1999). Their high degree of power over staff decisions and allocation of finances, the considerable stability in HEI leadership and high turnover of teaching staff (who did not enjoy the same degree of job-security and privileges as in most Western countries), the new arrangement de-facto put rectors firmly in charge of universities, with relatively little accountability and oversight. In Russia during the 1990ies, the rectors of the most prestigious HEIs such as Moscow State University became powerful actors, sometimes on a par with ministers of education (Drummond, T. W., 2011).

The idea of decentralization was strongly expressed in the 1992 Law. Municipal and private higher education educations were legalized, the number which soon mushroomed[26]. The law assigned general policy, legal framework and evaluation of the functioning of the higher educational system as a responsibility of the federal government, while other decentral, regional bodies would be responsible for implementation and formulating regional specificities, while municipal bodies would be responsible for the day-to-day management of local institutions (Adrian et al., 2000, p. 111). For a short time between 1992 and 1996 even the Russian regions gained the right to license new HEIs.

On the other hand, the federal government, remained the owner of all institutions of the public higher education and the affiliation of HEIs to various branch ministries continued. The Ministry of education retained its right to grant licenses, accredit institutions, and assign admission quotas. The branch ministries, which are considered as potential employers or have intimate ties with production units, finalize the admission quotas just in a formal way (Adrian et al., 2000, p. 115).

[26] Private HEIs underlie the same requirements regarding quality assurance of their study programs, teaching staff and their management structures and must submit to the same monitoring instruments as government-owned HEIs. They have a different legal status and must follow the tax code of private enterprise.

6.2.1.1 1992-1997: A new framework of quality assurance

In order to assure the quality of more autonomous HEIs as well as to maintain a unified educational space in Russia (Interview RU No. 4, 2015), the 1992 *Law On Education* established a new framework for quality assurance. State Educational Standards would define common standards for the operation of higher education institutions and the contents of study programs, while a system of State *licensing, attestation,* and *accreditation* (*litsenzirovaniye, attestatsiya i akkreditatsiya*) would certify that HEIs complied with these standards, which were the same for both State as well as private HEIs. The first set of the SES was developed between 1992 and 1996 and entered into force in 1994-95. It contained over 600 state standards for every education program being taught at HEIs at the time in Russia. The system of state standards, licensing, attestation and accreditation entered into force in full between 1995 and 1997. This meant that the quality assurance system changed from a model of state-set targets, control, and inspection into one based on a set of rules within which private initiative in this sector became possible, something that had never existed in Russia previously (Motova & Pykkö, 2012).

Under the new system **licensing** was a procedure to verify whether an HEI had sufficient facilities (premises, equipment, information and library resources, and teaching staff) to carry out educational activities. Attaining a license meant that HEIs are authorized to deliver instruction and benefit from certain tax benefits (EACEA, 2012c). Licensing needed to take place before any students had started their studies. **Attestation** consisted of verifying graduate' performance on the dimensions outlined in State Educational Standards (SES). The *State Inspection Service* (*gossudarstvennaya inspektsiya*) was charged with examining every State HEI every five years for compliance with the SES. Since the process required graduates, it could only be conducted five years after the first cohort of students started their degree. Non-compliance could lead to a closure of the HEI. **Accreditation** was a process focusing on the institution leading to formal recognition of an HEI's status by the State. A positive result granted the accredited institution the right to award nationally recognized diplomas of the state format and made it eligible to participate in state budget funding mechanisms. Successful accreditation granted HEIs a status as either institute, academy or university, depending on their performance on a number of statistical indicators and the results of licensing and attestation. As opposed to licensing, which was mandatory for both private as well as public HEIs, accreditation was formally mandatory only for public HEIs. However, as only studies at accredited HEIs exempted male students from obligatory military service, all HEIs there was a strong incentive for private HEIs to apply for accreditation. In case of a positive decision, the HEI was granted a Certificate of State Accreditation with a supplement which lists the accredited educational programs the HEI had the right to offer. The certificate was granted for the period of five years.

In order to administer the procedures, in 1994, the *Department of Licensing, Accreditation and Nostrification* was founded within the Ministry of Education. Subordinated to the department, specialized centers were founded to provide statistical information (*Research and Information Centre of State Accreditation, founded in 1995 Yoshkar-Ola)* to administer reviewing expert panels (*Main Expert Centre of the Ministry of Education, established in Moscow*), and to verify the compliance of study programs with the SES within the framework of the attestation process the (*Information and Methodological Centre on Attestation, founded in Shakhty*). The *Department of Licensing, Accreditation and Nostrification* itself coordinated the relations between HEIs and the specialized centers. Decisions on state accreditation were delegated to the *Accreditation Board* at the Russian Ministry of Education. The decisions on licensing, attestation and accreditation were taken by the same commission and were often taken simultaneously (Motova, 2015). The board was composed of heads of HEIs, and representatives of associations of HEIs and sectoral ministries (Chistokhvalov, 2007). The first 20 accreditations were conducted in April of 1997.

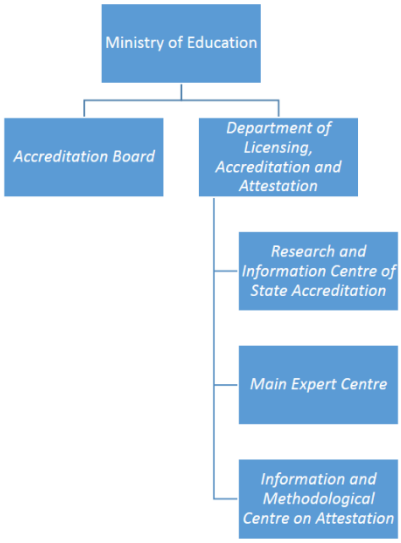

Figure 11: Institutional arrangement of the 1992-2004 system of accreditation

Motova & Rykkö (2012) argue that "objectivity, openness, transparency and availability of information were put forward as the main principles of state accreditation". They argue that the Russian state accreditation methodology is based on the US model of institutional accreditation, it was actually relatively liberal in allowing different types of HEIs to apply for State Recognition and establishes clear standards and a transparent procedure to attain it.

6.2.1.2 1992-2000: Economic crisis, boom and growth of autonomy of HEIs

At the same time, however, the economic and above all industrial base of Russia collapsed. Between 1990-2000, some estimates place the contraction of the Russian GDP at almost 50% (Adrian et al., 2000) This decline went hand in hand with a massive loss of employment, most pronounced in industry (36%), followed by agriculture (20%), construction (23%), transport and communication (16%) (Gimpelson, Kapeliushnikov, & Lukyanova, 2007). While employment numbers stayed relatively constant in education, inflation reduced real-salaries often to poverty-levels and there were times, when payment of even these meager salaries was several months late. While employment numbers went down, the demand for specialists with higher education rose, especially in the areas of economics, law and other "new" disciplines. The drive for higher education was further strengthened by students aspiring to higher education due to a lack of other options on the labor market.

This situation led to a colossal growth of enrollment into HE and likewise of the number of HEIs. A number of new government HEIs appeared. An even greater growth appeared in the sector of non-governmental HEIs. Both State and non-State HEIs founded new departments, new branches in other cities. This growth followed its own, market-driven logic, not government planning or strategy. Indeed, the government tried to curb the quantitative growth and the transformation of institutes and academies into universities (who could apply for more funding and could participate in special government investment programs), but by the end of the 1990ies, the majority of state HEIs had the status of universities.

When State HEIs received the right to accept students on a fee-paying basis (those who had not been successful at securing a state-funded place), their number rose so quickly that there were attempts to curb their enrollment, in particular in the social sciences and some humanities fields, at least somewhat. In 1996, the government introduced a quota of 25% on the number of fee-paying students at state HEIs for these fields. Such 'private' enrollment was not supposed to exceed state supported enrollment in absolute numbers, but the quota was frequently ignored by HEIs. The rising demand for university studies also made university entrance examinations much more competitive. In 1999, the number of applications surpassed by the number of study places in public universities by a factor of two overall, by a factor of as many as 12 to 14 for each place at prestigious institutions (Smolentseva, 2010). The combination of high competitiveness, a sometimes low level of preparedness for the examinations, and the high cost of private tutoring, led to a situation in which the transition interface between school and university had become particularly ripe with corruption (Smolentseva, 2010).

The 1990ies can be characterized as a period of market-liberalization in which HEIs received substantial institutional autonomy. As a former vice-minister for education remembered, "*We cannot give you money but we can give you freedom*" was a prevalent understanding between HEIs and the Ministry of Education during the 1990ies (Interview RU No. 14, 2017). During this time, there was very little in the way of state "signaling" to HEIs what they wanted them to do (Interview RU No. 9, 2017)[27]. The quality assurance framework of licensing, attestation and accreditation and the State Standards represented some barriers and structure to the HE system but essentially, HEIs were "on their own" and the Government did not have a strong policy agenda and was not actively pursuing a development strategy (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). The reasons for this "laissez-faire" attitude were multiple. On the one hand, US-American economic liberalism dominated the ideological agenda in many areas and it was assumed that market forces would eventually counteract early negative side-effects. Secondly, the budget crisis also effected the government institutions which limited the capacity of the state to effectively intervene. Thirdly, Motova argues (2015) that the massive expansion of the HE system indeed served to ensure social cohesion: Given the difficult economic situation, in the absence of jobs, higher education was to be made available to all parts of the population, even at the expense of quality.

[27] The interview partner is a senior Russian researcher on higher education

6.2.2 Renaissance of state control, internationalization and renewed investment into higher education (2000-2004)

During the 1990s, Russian HEIs had struggled to adapt to the new conditions with "*one economic foot in the private market and another in the inherited Soviet economic model*" (Forrat, 2015). In the beginning of the 2000s, the government began to reassert itself and its steering capacity for the higher education system. Political conditions for policy reforms had changed in Russia. Rising oil-prices and the ruble-depreciation of 1998 contributed to rapid economic growth thereafter. This economic boon in connection with the end of the second Chechenian war contributed to significant popular support for the new president Vladimir Putin. A pro-presidential majority in the State Duma had been established in 1999, which approved almost all of the Kremlin's initiatives (Remington 2006). The "Strategy for socio-economic development of Russia 2000-2010", known also as "Strategy 2010" or "Gref Program" was developed in 2000 by experts of the Centre for Strategic Research (*Tsentr strategicheskikh razrabotok—CSR*) with contributions of experts from the Higher School of Economics outlined a roadmap towards financial stabilization and re-centralizing state control and oversight in many areas (Gel'man & Starodubtsev, 2016). A clear success of this program was the reform of the tax code which, between 1998 and 2004, established unified rules of taxation and fiscal governance and introduced a flat-tax of 13%. This significantly increased state revenues from taxation. A new of progressive taxation for oil exports in combination with climbing oil prices brought the government a further windfall of revenues.

Among other areas which profited from the upturn in state finances, since the beginning of the 2000ies, education was re-identified as a priority, if not the main priority (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018). The Gref program represented a watershed in official rhetoric (Interview RU No. 16, 2017). Already in 1997, a group of experts from the Higher School of Economics and government officials had been appointed by the governmental council on Economic Reform to develop a program of education reform. The group had concluded that, aside from under-financing, the key problem of the Russian education system was its governance system, which had remained an island of the Soviet planned economy, defended by powerful and active interest groups that benefitted from the status quo (Starodubtsev, 2017). Inspired by this analysis of the status quo, the Gref program proposed a number of liberal reforms, such as a major change in the funding model based on competition between schools and universities for students, and the introduction of a centralized national admission exam. This provoked a coalition of opponents to the liberal reforms (of university rectors speared of Moscow State University Rector Viktor Sadovnichiy and communist members of parliament) to develop an alternative policy document, the *National Doctrine for Education* (2000) which argued that there was little need for structural reform if only the underfunding of the education system would be remedied. Formally endorsing the document, with the approval of the president, the MoES then adapted it further until its contents closely corresponded to the original CSR proposals, which it began to implement in 2000 (Starodubtsev, 2017). Backed by rising oil prices, the government stopped the downwards trend in funding and again increased its investment

into higher education and approached a number of governance reforms. The Ministry of Education under Vladimir Filippov (1998-2004) increasingly saw itself as an actor, that could actively set and pursue its own policy agenda, rather than just regulate a laisser-faire market (Interview RU No. 9, 2017).

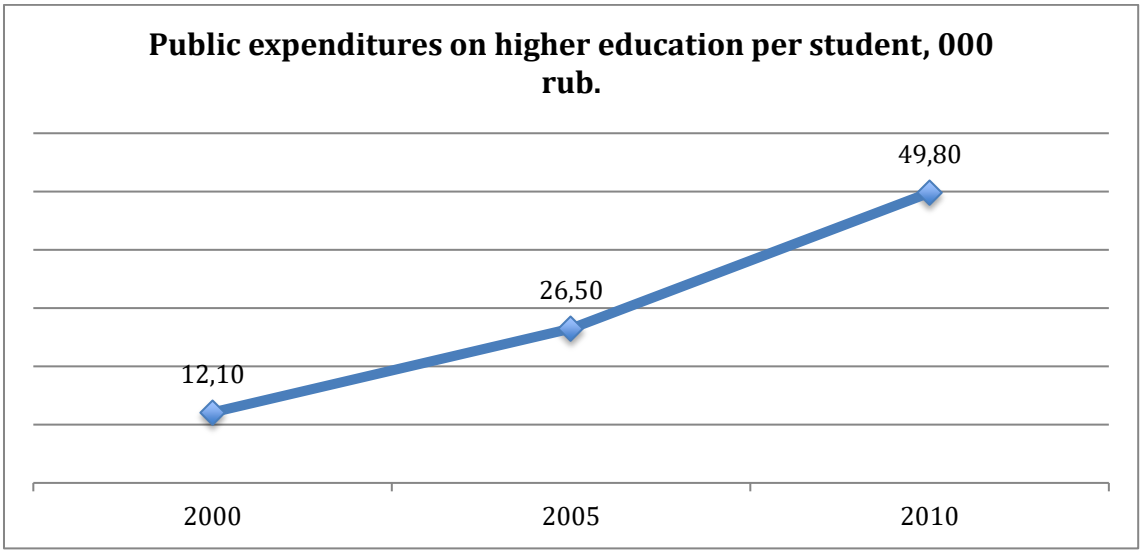

Figure 12: Public expenditures on higher education per student. Source: (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018)

6.2.2.1 1999-2009: Development of the Unified State Exam

The massive expansion of the higher education system during the 1990ies had led to an intensive discussion among policy-makers, in the media and in the wider society about the quality of and access to higher education institutions. Especially the question of admittance to HEIs was seen as deeply corrupted. Since Soviet times, HEIs had admitted students on the basis of entrance examinations which they themselves administered. Critical issues of this system were perceived to be the low level of preparedness of school leavers and the high level of corruption which had become normal at the stage of entering universities. Because especially regional high schools failed to prepare students adequately for university entry examinations, a parallel tutoring system had emerged, for which parents needed to pay private teachers out of their own pockets. In addition, in many public universities, budgetary funded study places were increasingly being allotted not based on merit, but on the grounds of connections (through relative or friends among the HEIs' administration and academic staff) or on the basis of bribes, which could be comparatively cheaper than paying for tutoring sessions. The result was an erosion of entry requirements for HE (Motova, 2015).

The idea of introducing a centralized state exam for university admissions with the goal of making access to higher education more transparent, more merit-based and less corruption-prone was hardly new. It had been discussed since the early 1990ies and had already been implemented in the post-Soviet state of Azerbaijan (1992), Uzbekistan (1993), Estonia (1997), and Kazakhstan (1999) and was being planned in others. International organizations such as the World Bank and the OECD had recommended the introduction of centralized testing for years (Gounko & Smale, 2007).

In January 2000, a new "national doctrine of education in the Russian Federation" was passed into law by Parliament, guaranteeing tuition- free professional and higher education for 50 percent of students and tuition-free graduate education, provided students pass the respective entry examination. In order to help to bridge the preparedness gap, reduce corruption and make university-admission more transparent and merit-based, it was decided to introduce a system of centralized national testing. The plan to implement this new centralized state exam in Russia was first articulated in "*The Concept of Modernizing Education in Russia by 2010*". In 2001, the Ministry of Education launched the Unified State Exam (*Edinyi gosudarstvennyi ekzamen - EGE*) with financial support from the World Bank as an experiment in 16 regions of Russia. The exam was taken at the end of school and consisted of a set of written exams and formalized tests on different school subjects in accordance with the secondary school curriculum. The results were part of school leaving qualifications and a number of HEIs started to accept the EGE results as a replacement for its entrance exams. This was attractive because the EGE increased the chances for young people from the Russian provinces to be admitted to leading universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg (Smolentseva, Evgeny, & Natalya, 2015). The EGE's application across regions increased year by year. This approach reduced the opposition and allowed the operational refinement of its application.

From the outset, there was strong resistance against the EGE among academics across Russia. Rectors fought to have their HEIs exempted from having to accept EGE results for admission. Most criticism focused on the methodology of using multiple-choice tests and the "foreignness" of the approach (Kishkovsky, 2011). To a degree, the corruption that had characterized the admission process into universities seemed to move to the level of schools where issues like leaked tests and answer keys, teachers assisting students to take the tests, and suspiciously positive results from North Caucasus Republics compared to the rest of the country cast doubt onto the objectivity of the exam. However, by 2005, according to a report by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Moscow School of Economics (Clark, N., 2005), some students were paying the equivalent of five years of tuition in bribes to get into top Moscow universities and the higher education was seen as the most corrupt sector of Russian society with over half of all families paying bribes to instructors and college-admissions officials (Drummond, T. W. & Gabrscek, 2014). Victor Bolotov, the head of Rosobrnadzor pointed to the fact the most HEIs were using the same multiple-choice approach to entrance examinations, against which they were arguing on the basis of objections of objectivity (Drummond, T. W. & Gabrscek, 2014).

In 2008, despite the strong opposition of university rectors and academics, and despite the media scandals that had surrounded the EGE, it was made the mandatory exclusive[28] requirement to enter higher education in Russia. With the introduction of the EGE, the State had reasserted its own power over regulating access to higher education. Resistance against the EGE in the form of allegation of corruption, mismanagement in its execution, and fundamental unsuitability of its methods continued. As Drummond

[28] Exceptions were granted only to winners of national science olympiads

& Gabrscek (2014) point out, however, "*In a volatile political environment where the stakes are high, it can be difficult to determine the veracity of reports, claims, and counterclaims. […].* Many students and their families, remained dissatisfied with the EGE, because of the considerable time and money they need to invest to prepare for the exam, as tutoring for the EGE had turned into a booming private market (Smolentseva et al., 2015). The EGE gave the state a powerful instrument to regulate the size of the HE system and the minimal level of skill of university students by defining the minimal passing grade. It also provided it with valuable information about the educational attainment in different schools and regions of Russia. Data on the average EGE grade of students are used as an indicator of the attractiveness of individual HEIs.

6.2.2.2 2000-2002: Reforms to the quality assurance system: New generation of SES and merging of attestation and accreditation

The year 2000 marks the turning point also for the quality assurance system in Russia. The quality assurance system was streamlined for the entire higher education sector. The 2nd generation of the SES was prepared in 2000-2001 which allowed HEIs to determine up to 20% of their educational program content themselves. Attestation and accreditation were merged into a single procedure. Accreditation became compulsory for all HEIs (before, it had been only for state HEIs) and a common set of indicators and statistical parameters were defined by which the performance of all HEIs would be measured. Considerations about joining the Bologna Process, the spread of information technologies which allowed cost-effective information gathering in Russia facilitated these changes (Motova, 2015). Since 2000, the accreditation procedure rested on three pillars: The results of an HEI's self-evaluation; an external evaluation by an expert panel (*komissiya po otsenke sootvetstviya trebovaniyam obrazovatel'nym standartam*); and an assessment of quantitative indicators of an HEI's activity.

Emergence of independent accreditation

In 2002, the first non-state accreditation agency was the accreditation center established by the Russian Association for Engineering Education (*Akkreditatsionnyy tsentr Assotsiatsii inzhenernogo obrazovaniya Rossii, ATS AIOR*), which was joined in 2004 by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Career Development *(Agentstvo po kontrolyu kachestva i razvitiyu kar'yery* - AKKORK) and, in 2009, by the Association of Law Schools of Russia and the Association of Legal Education and the Association of Lawyers of Russia.

In 2002/2003, related to Russia's ascension to the Bologna Process, proposals within the Ministry of Education were discussed that Rosobrnadzor would certify public professional accreditation agencies and recognize their accreditation as equivalent to state accreditation. The planned certification was never implemented, however. A former key official of Rosobrnadzor identified resistance among high-ranking officials as the key reason that this was never implemented:

"To civil servants, this was not advantageous. You know, the more rights a civil servant has, the more opportunities he has to get some kind of profit out of it. They always came up with some grounds of why not give these rights to this organization or to that. After 2009, nobody [in Rosobrnadzor] took up the subject again" (Interview RU No. 14, 2017)

Demand for independent accreditation remained low, however, and the agencies offering it did not gain a significant role in the overall governance of the higher education system.

Promoting Quality Management within HEIs

In 2000, the MoE organized the first competition for the best quality management systems within universities and ordered rectors to implement "objective measurements of the work of faculty and students" (Forrat, 2012a).

6.2.2.3 2002-2005: Promoting market-mechanisms in financing through student vouchers and university rankings

The aborted reform of higher education financing (2002-2005)

During the 1990ies, State funding for HEIs had been calculated based on assumed line item costs for faculty salaries, maintenance, libraries, etc. by the Ministry, often following discussions, negotiations and agreements with the individual rectors.

In 2002, an experiment on higher education financing was launched in the form of so-called educational vouchers, officially dubbed "state financial obligations to individuals" (*gosudarstvennye imennye finansovye obyazatel'stva—GIFO*). The idea originated in 2000, was developed by experts at the Higher School of Economics and became part of the "Gref Program". The objective was to increase the efficiency of use of public funds, create incentives for students to study and for universities to compete for the best students. This was to be realized through a grant system for students, which would receive a grant of a size depending on students' scores on the Unified State Exam which they could then use at any Russian HEI. Depending on their scores, students would be endowed with a certain amount of public funds to study at an HEI of their choice. It was assumed that high school graduates with high EGE scores would flock to the best universities, which would benefit from the funding these students carried, while weaker universities would receive less. This mechanism was intended to promote competition between universities for the best students, further differentiate the higher education landscape in Russia, stimulate a fee-paying model of higher education in Russia, and promote the use of the EGE (Klyachko, T. Lvovna, 2002).

The GIFO experiment lasted only for three years, however, and never grew beyond a limited number of regions. When Andrei Fursenko became the new minister in 2004, he decided to end the experiment. The reasons for this were negative feedback from universities' representatives and the State Duma. The same step-by-step implementation as for the EGE had been planned, but the GIFO system could not

demonstrate positive effects without a country-wide implementation (Stetligov, 2009). Gel'man & Starodubtsev (2016) argue that the reason for ultimate failure of this initiative was the lack of support from the Presidential administration. After the GIFO experiment was canceled, a new model of "normative financing" (*normativnoe finansirovanie*) was developed. Since 2011, all public institutions (HEIs, hospitals, kindergartens, etc.) received their budget in the form of a formula-based lump sum. This greatly increased transparency of financing (Interview RU No. 12, 2017) and allowed gave HEIs the autonomy to create their own financial planning, independent of ministry interference (Interview RU No. 12, 2017).

Promotion of University rankings

Prior to the 2000ies, a university's reputation was perpetuated through word of mouth and "common wisdom" placing certain state HEIs in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the top of the reputational ladder. The first ranking of Russian universities was published by the *Kar'era* magazine in 1999. In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued its own public HEI ranking[29] which it continued to produce until 2009 when it contracted the development of rankings out to the Interfax Group and Radio "Ekho Moskvy" (Forrat, 2012a). Other organizations ranging from media to professional and student associations, and the universities themselves launched various rankings of their own during the 2010ies.

6.2.3 Asserting state control and promoting differentiation of the higher education system (2004-2012)

In 2004, Vladimir Filippov was succeeded by Andrey Fursenko as minister of education. Under Fursenko, the consolidation and differentiation of the HE system became state policy. While Filippov (Minister between 1998-2004) had been rector of the *Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN*), and had coordinated his policy initiatives to a relatively close degree with the academic community in the form of the Russian Rectors' Union, his successor, Fursenko (who would be in office from 2004 to 2012), pursued a higher education policy increasingly independent of and often contrary to the opinion of rectors and the academic community (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). The overall approach was guided by the concept of so-called pivot points (*tochki rosta*), upon which public resources in HE should be concentrated. The idea was that selected universities should play the central role in driving the Russian HE system. In interviews Fursenko gave in 2004 and 2005, he argued that there should be 20-50 leading HEIs as well as 150-200 HEIs of second rank to provide highly qualified specialists to the economy (Fedyukin & Froumin, 2010). Forrat (2015) summarizes the discourses employed in justifying this goal

[29] See Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation N 631 "O reitinge vysshikh uchebnykh zavedeniy (vmeste s vremennoy metodikoy opredeleniya reitingov spetsial'nostey i vuzov)" (On the ranking of higher education institutions [together with the temporary methodology of programs' and institutions' rankings]). February 26, 2001. Minobrnauki RF. (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation) Reitingi vuzov Rossii 2001- 2009. (Ranking of Russian higher education institutions.) Access date: May 30, 2011. http://rating.edu.ru/Old.aspx.

as 1) economy of scale, (2) giving back to the economy and society, and (3) international competitiveness: Resources should be focused in a smaller number of high-quality HEIs which actually had a good track record in the fields they were offering, rather than being wasted on supporting a large number of small, low-quality HEIs, for quality assurance by the Ministry of Education was difficult to conduct. Resources should be invested in leading HEIs so that these could pay competitive salaries, invest in facilities and equipment, and as a consequence provide better education results and thus better value-for-money for the State, and improve international competitiveness. Especially during the first half of the 2000ies, better integration into the European and international higher education system and attracting more international students were also used as justifications for reforms (Tomusk, 2007), although this faded in the second half of the 2000ies.

Starting from the mid-2000s, a number of government programs appeared which were intended to move the HE system in the direction of this vision. It was also evident, that the demographic "bump", which had driven enrollment to record highs was over and that demand for higher education would start falling from 2009. This may have reduced the pressure on the government to prioritize wide access over quality.

6.2.3.1 2004-2009: Russia and the Bologna Process

Galina Motova (2015) described the period between 2004-2009 as the phase of "Europeanization" of quality assurance. The Bologna Process, which was launched in Russia before the country-wide implementation of the EGE, was the first really significant system-wide reform that was implemented top-down by the Government against strong opposition of universities. While the government had regulated HEIs since the 1990ies by defining common state standards and the system of licensing, attestation and accreditation, none of these instruments had touched the structure of the higher education system. When the government had increased licensing requirements, it was painful to some universities, but did not really affect the vast majority of them (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). When the government had granted universities more freedoms, this had been generally welcomed by universities, although it generated criticism from other stakeholders who feared that a lessening of government control would lead to corruption and declining standards. The Bologna Process was a shock to the academic community because it represented a strong intervention into the practices of academia which the State – although it formally regulated these areas – had not touched since the 1960ies. With the Bologna Process, the government was for the first time criticized for doing something, rather than for doing nothing (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). Although the government's decision to join the European Higher Education Area was heavily debated and faced strong opposition among university leaders and administration, students, and their parents, Russia joined the Bologna Declaration in 2003. The ministry's success in passing the Bologna Process was considered a big victory for the Ministry. As a former advisor to Fursenko pointed out, university rectors suddenly realized that the ministry could have not only a laissez-faire agenda, but an active reform agenda of its own (Interview RU No. 9, 2017).

After Russia joined the Bologna process in 2003, Russia launched a number of legislative initiatives and regulations regarding the introduction of a two-tier system of degrees, introduced a new generation of educational standards granting greater freedom to HEIs to define their own contents of study programs as well as a number of provisions on quality management within HEIs (Motova, 2015). Between 2005 and 2007, a third generation of SES was prepared, featuring a competence-based approach (Fomin & Reznikova, 2006) and changed their concept and structure to focus more strongly on outcomes and to allow a greater degree of academic freedom in adapting curricula to regional labor market needs (EACEA, 2012c). The Ministry of Education also formed a "Coordination Council on Quality Provision" which discussed different models of quality management for HEIs which resulted in a set of recommendations on the creation and implementation of quality management systems in the universities in 2005 and made the effectiveness of internal quality management systems one of the indicators for accreditation (Forrat, 2012a). The Bologna Process certainly contributed external legitimacy as well as some of the models for these policy initiatives, even though they encountered massive resistance both within as outside of the government.

6.2.3.2 2004-2012: Shifting power in the quality assurance system

Reforming the QA infrastructure (2004-2008)

In 2004, the entire infrastructure of education and research system was reformed. To begin with, the Ministry of Education was merged with the Ministry of Science to reflect the idea of integration of higher education and research. Also in 2004, the new ministry merged several agencies into the "Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Education and Science (Rosobnadzor). The function of the MoE *Department of Licensing, Accreditation and Attestation* Ministry were transferred to Rosobrnadzor. Director of Rosobnadzor became Victor Bolotov, who had already served as vice-minister of education between 1992 and 2004 and who had co-authored the Unified State exam.

In 2005, following the ascension to the Bologna Process two years earlier, a number of changes were made to the quality assurance system. As a clear signal of alignment to the Bologna Process, the *Information and Methodological Centre* was renamed into *National Accreditation Agency "Rosakkredagenstvo*. The several, formerly semi-independent institutions participating in the process of quality assurance (*Research and Information Centre of State Accreditation and the Main Expert Centre*) were as well as *"Rosakkredagenstvo"* became dependent organizations of Rosobnadzor to which it delegated most of the practical operations and which, in practical terms, is responsible for operating the entire state accreditation procedure until the preparation of the analytical report to the Accreditation Board. The publication of self-evaluation reports became mandatory for state-accredited HEIs. A public register of accredited Russian HEIs in Russian and English was set up on a specially designed website and was distributed to schools in book form yearly since 2007 (Motova & Pykkö, 2012).

In addition, since 2004, a number of measures were implemented to improve stakeholder involvement in quality assurance. After Russia joined the Bologna process in 2003, work on a third generation of SES began, featuring a competence-based approach (Fomin & Reznikova, 2006) and allowing a greater degree of academic freedom and better adapting curricula to regional labor market needs (EACEA, 2012c). By decree of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science no. 152 of 30 December 2004 the **Council on State Educational Standards of Professional Education** was created which now included representatives of employer associations as well as academics[30]. Since 2007, review panels in state accreditation needed to consist of experts, which needed to have undergone training and certification. Students and employer representatives were now to be included in the reviews and campus visits. A new generation of State Educational Standards following a competency-oriented approach was developed and published in 2008. As incorporated professional associations in Russia were weak and tolerated only in the form of state-public organizations, development of standards and the final decision over accreditation stayed under the control of Rosobrnadzor, however.

Centralization of state accreditation (2009-2012)

In 2009, by decision of the new head of Rosobrnadzor, a staff reshuffle took place at the National Accreditation Agency (*Rosakkredagenstvo*) and almost all of the staff left due to disagreements over the role and functioning of the agency (Interview RU No. 4, 2015). The centralization was completed when the seat of Rosakkredagenstvo was moved from Yoshkar-Ola to Moscow in 2011 where the agency now shares offices in the same building as Rosobrnadzor to which it is subordinated. At the same time, the approach of conducting accreditation changed.

From 2009/2010 a yearly demographic decline in the number of students of around 10% had set in. The government saw the need to reduce the number of HEIs and study programs, preferably in the segment of lowest quality and selectiveness. As a former leading official of Rosakkredagenstvo remembers, licensing and accreditation were transformed from a fairly bureaucratic yet predictable process into a powerful instrument of state steering and control in the hands of Rosobnadzor and – by extension – the MoES:

> *[…] The government did not have the luxury anymore to educate 80% of school leavers. Because it cannot, the system needs to be shrunken, and to shrink a system is incredible difficult. This is why, as one of the mechanisms, it was decided to use the mechanism of accreditation, meaning, the refusal to grant accreditation. And the decision was taken to turn accreditation implicitly but de-facto into a strict control mechanism" (Interview RU No. 4, 2015)*

An important change was that Rosobnadzor received the right to revoke a license at any time based on their own, not in all cases objective criteria. Whereas earlier, Rosobrnadzor needed to go to court to

[30] Decree of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science no. 152 of 30 December 2004

withdraw a license or accreditation in case of a violation, now, Rosobrnadzor itself received this right. As a former leading official from Rosobrnadzor explains:

> *"The assessment and accreditation of HEIs is a prerogative of Rosobrnadzor. This is a very strong instrument of power. You give to some, you don't give to others. A very powerful function. Even though there are more than 3000 HEIs and branches in Russia, it is clear that the loss of a license or of accreditation, this is a really big loss [..] Therefore, there is an infinite number of issues related to the objectivity of decision-making" […] Now there will be a trial of the European university, a good university. They will sue Rosobrnadzor. This is not the first attempt [to close a university]. There were many attempts in this direction, but earlier we decided these issues though the courts, as we could not decide on accreditation ourselves. [..] The courts are in favor of the government, but this is a long, tedious process, a large machine which accompanies these things. [..] now it is easier, Rosobrnadzor cancels [accreditation] and [the universities] need to go to court and try to protest […] For many this already means a loss of reputation, a loss of students, and you will go to court? You already have nothing." (Interview RU No. 14, 2017)*

Many experts of the higher education system share this view and point out that Rosobrnadzor does not even have to base their decisions on academic shortcomings:

> *„Rosobrnadzor can close practically any HEI. Because, well, taking into consideration the safety requirements of the educational process […] Rosobrnadzor does not come and say, "Putin does not like you, I am closing you". It comes and says "you do not comply with the fire safety requirements, you do not have the correct safety equipment or "in your buildings, the electrical cables are made of aluminum, but according to the new requirements, they must be made of copper". In these cases, they do not care that the building was constructed when the standards allowed aluminum instead of copper." (Interview RU No. 8, 2017).*

This change of character of the accreditation process was clearly felt in the higher education system. As one expert explains:

> *Accreditation was inefficient for a number of reasons. Part of it was certainly corruption. Another reason was that the government did not have a formulated policy on [education] infrastructure. In this sense accreditation was arbitrary, depended to a great degree on the subjective assessment of those who participated in that process. It was very formalized and highly centralized and the professional and local communities [stakeholders] did not participate in the process. [After 2009, accreditation] started to be used a lot more effectively. Whereas a withdrawal of accreditation used to be a highly unusual event - on the contrary, in fact, everybody who underwent accreditation received it - now, this is fairly widespread. In this sense Rosobrnadzor*

raised its requirements, hardened its activity. In general, we can say that today this [Rosobrnadzor] is a very active organ of state power, which takes very hard decisions which it did not do earlier" (Interview RU No. 8, 2017)

6.2.3.3 Targeted government programs to differentiate the Russian HE system:

Innovative education programs (2004) and Federal Universities (since 2005)

When the first international university rankings appeared in the early 2000ies, Russian academics and policy makers were shocked to find that – in stark contrast to the popular expectation of them being among the world's leaders, Russian universities were almost non-existent in them (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Partly because of the brain drain during the 1990ies, but in strong part owing to the traditional Soviet separation of teaching from research (research being conducted in institutes of the academy of science, graduate students at universities did not participate in research projects at research institutes, university professors had very high teaching loads), only 10-15% of university faculty were active in research at all (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). In 2004, a series of programs were prepared to invest into the leading higher education institutions of the country.

Since the early 2000ies, the MoES and the Russian government had experimented with targeted financing (*programmy proektnogo finansirovaniya*) through which HEIs could apply for funding for the realization of specific goals, investment in infrastructure, support for research, internationalization and other reforms. In the fall of 2005 the President of Russia announced several "National Priority Projects" (*prioritetnye natsionalnye proekty*) in public services, including in Education. The most visible impact of the national priority project framework was probably the 2006 across-the-board increase in wages in healthcare and education and investment into infrastructure. For higher education, these included support for "*universities implementing innovative education programs*" (IEPs) and the "*Federal University Program*".

Foundation of Federal Universities

Two new Federal universities were to be created in the Russian regions with more to follow. After intense deliberations and public discussion, it was decided that these new universities were to emerge by merging preexisting HEIs on territories were Russia's strategic interests were present and where it was seen critical to improve the quality of life (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). These universities were designated to supply highly professionals for the macro-regions as well as provide a basis for a strong research component (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Federal Universities were to implement innovative study programs, modernize higher education, offer training and skills development for the socio-economic development of the region, carry out basic and applied research, and bring it into application. Federal Universities were the first Russian HEIs who had to prepare a strategic development plan, have an advisory board, and develop their own education standards (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). In addition, the development plan needed to be approved by the government of the Russian Federation and the

rector was appointed by the Government. Between 2006 and 2015, a total of nine federal Universities were established by mergers of over 40 smaller universities[31] (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Federal Universities received substantial financial resources from the state budget: 2007: 6 bln. RUB; 2007-2009: 13,4 bln. RUB; as well as co-financing by businesses and regional administrations. Funding for federal universities ended in 2014.

While participation in these programs represented a significant financial boon for universities, it also limited their autonomy as from 2009, rectors of Federal Universities started to be appointed by the government. Simultaneously, all Federal Universities were obligated to establish "boards of overseers" (*nablyudatel'nye sovety*). These boards, composed of representatives of federal and regional authorities and administrations, business associations, and significant local employers, were intended as collegial organs supporting the implementation of strategic development plans by providing input from local and regional realities, while also increasing the transparency of the HEI and help it to diversify its financing sources. They did not receive any decision-making powers.

The results of the Federal university program are considered to be mixed in Russia: The preparedness of their students (measured by their EGE scores) is relatively low, there are few graduate programs, underdeveloped cooperation with local enterprises, limited research performance, and limited international cooperation activities (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). By and large, the Federal Universities had failed to meet the high expectations set for them. They had been established too quickly without proper preliminary environment analysis and without sufficiently engaging external stakeholders, resulting in unimplementable strategies (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Since 2008, the process of differentiation of the higher education system by strengthening its leaders was intensified was pursued further in a number of programs, while simultaneously clamping down on the weaker segments of the HE system.

Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities, National Research Universities gain special status (2008)

Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University had always been seen as "flagships" of the Russian HE system with a good record of research. In 2008, both universities received a special legal status exempting them from having to comply with the State Educational Standards and received significant resources for infrastructure development (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Their rectors were made to be appointed directly by the Russian President.

In addition, between 2008–2010, a national competition was organized among Russia's universities to be select the strongest research universities which would be awarded the title of *National Research*

[31] The Southern Federal University in Rostov-on-Don and the Siberian Federal University in Krasnoyarsk, The Northern (Arctic) Federal Universityin Arkhangelsk, the Kazan Federal University, the Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg, the Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok and the the North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk, the North-Caucasian Federal University in Stavropol and the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad.

University (Fedyukin & Froumin, 2010) and funding for the realization of their strategic development plans.

While the Federal University program had been developed with relatively little outside input, the competition was inspired by the concepts and experiences of the Chinese 211 and 985 Projects, the South Korean Brain Korea 21 Program, the Japanese Global 30 Project, the German Excellence Initiative and others. The selection criteria were a high number and quality of research and innovation projects; a noticeable diversity of scientific research; the ability to radically transform the curriculum, staff management and organizational structure (both administrative and academic departments); a high level of formal qualifications and competence of teaching and research staff; and "experience of innovative activity" (Morgan & Kliucharev, 2012).The selection took place on a competitive basis in 2008 and in 2009 by an expert group set up by the Ministry for Education and Science. The status "National Research University" was awarded to a university for the period of 10 years. In the end, 29 universities were selected and received funding for implementing their development program 2009–2013[32]. Applying to become a national research university, HEIs needed to accept to change their status to autonomous universities (AUs) and to set up boards of overseers (*nablyudatel'nye sovety*), analogous to Federal universities.

The particularity of the National Research Universities as opposed to the 2006 Federal Universities was that the latter were primarily intended to support the development of their geographic region, while the first were to promote internationally recognized research excellence, develop systems for its commercialization, and cooperate with innovation-based companies. The total additional funding for the National Research Development Program for the period 2009-2012 was 34.825 billion RUB, most of which was invested in improving the material base and information resources, but also into quality management and internationalization (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). The program had a considerable impact on the selected universities in terms of published research with the number of articles in Web of Science and Scopus-indexed journals rising by 23% respectively. At the same time, the quality of student intake (in terms of their EGE results) and of staff recruitment (in terms of their scholarly degrees) was significant (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014).

State Programs to attract leading researchers to Russian HEIs

[32] Two pilot universities National Research Nuclear University - Moscow Engineering Physics Institute (State University) and National Research Technological University - State Technological University "Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys" were identified by the Decree of President D. Medvedev in 2008. Later in 2008 12 more universities were identified through competition (thus bringing a total to 14 universities), which were to obtain an amount of RUB 1.8 billion (approximately EUR 40.5 million) each for the years 2009-2018. In 2009 another 15 universities were identified through competition, which received RUB 49.8 billion from the federal budget for the years 2009-2014. Co-funding of their development programs from extra-budgetary funds should amount to RUB45 billion.

There have been several further initiatives to support research in Russian HEIs through attracting leading researchers to work in Russian. An example is the "220" project (Resolution P220: On measures designed to attract leading scientists to the Russian institutions of higher learning, 2010) which supplied 400m USD during 2010-2012 for the development of world class laboratories at Russian HEIs. According to Froumin & Povalko (2014), this has increased the quality of research, stimulated openness to international knowledge circulation, and acted as a catalyst for many HEIs to improve their laboratories even without the help of additional government funding.

6.2.3.4 The Unified State Exam, access barriers and forced consolidation of the HE system

Since 2001, the Unified State Exam (EGE) had been rolled out to ever more regions. In 2009, university-specific entrance examinations were abolished altogether and replaced by the government-administered EGE. The new nationwide state entry exam was intended to limit the possibility of corruption and the make access to HE easier and more transparent, particularly for cross-regional student migration. The EGE was also used as a government mechanism to regulate the size of the higher education system by introducing a minimum threshold of EGE test scores necessary for admission to HEIs, regardless of whether they were state-owned or private.

6.2.3.5 More focused funding of HE and change in allocation of funding

Since 2004, trying to better link financial support for higher education with public policy priorities, the State tried to influence the type of subjects studied by regulating the number of state-funded places in certain disciplines. Between 2004 and 2011, the number of state funded places in social sciences decreased by 30 %, while at the same time such places in engineering increased by 9 % (Abankina, I., Abankina, Filatova, & Nikolaenko, 2012). In addition, the state significantly increased its overall funding, investing mostly in large and successful institutions or forming new ones (with the 2006 Federal Union program), while revoking the licenses of about 600 public branch HEIs due to perceived low quality of their activity.

Since the 1990ies, universities had had an itemized fixed budget from the State as well as a certain assigned quota for training students funded by the budget ("state order"). In 2007, this model was replaced with a scheme, drawing on some of the ideas of the GIFO experiment, which made state funding dependent on the number of students which were actually enrolled on these state-funded places. This meant that universities were set to suffer financially, if they would be unable to enroll enough students to meet the state-ordered quota. The "per-student" funding model also made funding a tool of power in the hand of the MoES, as they could – at least in theory – now change the state order any particular institution, without tediously having to negotiate individual items in a budget.

6.2.3.6 Changes to university autonomy and asserting control over rector's appointments

In 2006, an important change in university autonomy took place, when an amendment to the law on education required that candidates for the post of rector had to be coordinated with and be approved by a governmental committee. Before the changes, rectors were elected by Academic Councils and then approved by the MoES which could veto the result of elections once, but the academic council could overturn this veto by a two-thirds vote. The new regulations meant that politically unreliable candidates could be excluded from running in the first place (Smolin & Nasibov, 2006).

With the same change of the law, the status of "autonomous institution" (*avtonomnoe ucherezhdenie* - AU) was introduced. This reform had been promoted by the same group of policymakers which had also developed the EGE and GIFO reforms (Forrat, 2012b). Such HEIs would be non-commercial institutions overseen by governing boards (*nablyudatel'nye sovety*). They would also receive lump-sum budgets and have financial autonomy about how to spend it. In addition, they would be allowed to keep any additional revenues and dispose over these funds as they pleased. Since 2006, only a few HEIs have chosen to change their status fearing financial cuts. HEIs participating in the targeted funding programs (Federal Universities, Research Universities, 5-100 and *opornye VUZy*) were required to convert to autonomous institutions. After 2012 this became a more widespread practice and according to one former vice-minister of education, rectors of most universities now find themselves in a position of strong dependency to the MoES (Interview RU No. 16, 2017).

6.2.4 Differentiated state steering (2012-2016)

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of secondary school leavers had declined from 1,457,800 to 789,300, while the number of state-funded places in universities had remained almost unchanged (Institut statisticheskikh issledovanii i ekonomiki znanii GU-VShE, 2012). The number of students had declined from a total of 7.5 million in 2008-09 to only 5.2 million in 2014-15 with population forecasts predicting a fall to just 4.2 million students in 2020 (Semyonov, 2015). This made higher education almost universally accessible regardless of their academic preparedness, which, as test results and many observers of the education system noted, was falling overall (Smolentseva et al., 2015). While universities concurred in this assessment of the situation, they were opposed to reducing access via a more rigid selection process. Froumin and Dobryakova (2012) relate this to the fact that many HEIs had arranged themselves with a status quo of "academic non-aggression pacts" whereby HEIs did not demand much of students as long as they did not voice complaints about the lack of quality of the education they received. Notwithstanding the lowering of standards, by 2008, almost all remaining Russian HEIs had received state accreditation, which had ceased to act as a driving force for consolidation or differentiation of the higher education system (Motova & Pykkö, 2012).

Both Ministers of Education and Science Andrey Fursenko (2004-2012) and Dmitry Livanov (2012-2016), stressed that government policy would be to fight low-quality HEIs. The framework of the Federal Program of Education Development 2016-2020 (Pravitel'stvo RF, 2014) stated that the number of HEIs should be reduced by 40% overall and the number of branch campuses by 80%. The low position of most Russian universities in international rankings were increasingly cited as reasons to consolidate an oversized yet underperforming HE system and to improve the quality and the overall "effectiveness" of the Russian HE system. Priorities became strengthening the top-performing HEIs while eliminating low-quality private HEIs, many of which were opened in the 1990s and did not have adequate own resources and teaching staff (Semyonov, 2015). In a number of significant changes to the governance of the higher education system, the government changed the rules of the game.

6.2.4.1 The "May Decrees" (*Maiskie Ukazy*) and the state program "Development of Education for the period 2013–2020"

After Vladimir Putin's reelection as president of the Russian Federation, he issued 218 decrees on social and educational policy, to be implemented between 2012-2020. These became known as the 2012 "May Decrees" (*Maiskie Ukazy*). Regarding higher education[33], the decrees describe a government program of raising salaries and stipends, improving state monitoring, steering, and control, clamping down on low-quality HEIs and of supporting the strongest. In particular, the decree states the following goals:

- *monitoring of the activities of state educational Institutions in order to assess the effectiveness of their work;*
- *the reorganization of inefficient state Educational institutions, providing for the reorganization of such institutions, ensuring the right Students completing studies in other state educational institutions;*
- *Development and implementation by the end of December 2012 of measures aimed at improving the efficiency of Unified state examination;*
- *Increase by the end of June 2012, the amount of scholarships to the subsistence level to first-year and second-year students in need of full-time study at the expense of Budget allocations of the federal budget for bachelor's programs and training programs*
- *Implementation by June 2013 of the transition to normative per capita financing*
- *Approval of new Federal Educational Standards*

The *May Decrees* also ordered further support for leading universities:

- *Increase in financing for leading universities (in engineering, medical and natural sciences (specialties)*

[33] Ukaz № 599 "*O merakh po realizatsii gosudarstvennoy politiki v oblasti obrazovaniya i nauki" (On measures to implement the state policy in the field of education and science"*): http://gubernator96.ru/uploads/599.pdf

- *Development and approval of a plan of actions for the development of leading Universities for increasing their competitiveness among the world's leading Scientific and educational centers;*
- *Increase in the volume of financing of state scientific funds, as well as research and development carried out on a competitive basis by leading universities;*

The May Decrees also ordered that the salaries of public employees should be raised across the board, with university professors and researchers to reach salaries exceeding the respective regional average by half. The considerable costs related to the Decrees was estimated by the Ministry of Finance at 2 trillion rubles between 2014 and in 2016 (Falyakhov, 2015). Some commentators called the decrees an attempt to form a loyal electorate, ultimately leading to an increase in the deficit and the destabilization of Russian regional budgets, which are required to bear the brunt of the financial implications.

The MoES had not been significantly involved with the development of the decrees concerning education (Interview RU No. 16, 2017) but had to answer for their implementation. This put it in a challenging position. The decrees had prescribed very short deadlines for relatively ambitious goals. For example, the development of a new monitoring of HEIs was to be developed and implemented within four months – a herculean task in an HEsystem with over 1200 HEIs.

As most universities had no additional funding available to raise salaries, some rectors were forced to cut the overall number of professors, in order to raise the salary of the remaining ones. While the implementation of the decrees in many areas was arguably only partial, those regarding higher education were mostly implemented. In particular the goal to consolidate the Russian system of higher education was clearly stated in the state program "Development of Education for the period 2013–2020" (Ministry of Education and Science of the RF, 2013). The program outlined that the future Russia higher education landscape should consist of: (a) leading research universities (40–60 institutions), which should act as the engines of innovation economy; (b) supporting universities of regional economic systems; and (c) universities providing extensive training for bachelor's degrees. The State Program further tightened regulation on low-quality higher education by cutting the number of state-funded places in universities, by introducing a higher minimal EGE passing grade for students applying for state-funded places, and by further limiting HEIs in what kind and levels of study programs they could offer (BA, MA, PHD).

6.2.4.2 Introduction of the government efficiency monitoring

Since 2009, several changes had taken place in the licensing and accreditation procedures. Since 2011, HEIs did not have to renew their license on a fixed schedule of every 5 years any more, which became valid for an unlimited duration. However, Rosobrnadzor received the right to conduct unannounced inspections at any time. This had been used in individual cases as an instrument of political control (Forrat, 2012a) but became much more widespread with the introduction of a new government assessment instrument, the so-called "effectiveness monitoring" (*monitoring effektivnosti*). Unsatisfied with

the failure of the accreditation system to reduce the number of low-quality HEIs and to improve the efficiency of public spending, in 2012–2013, a new yearly evaluation procedure had been mandated in the *Maiskie ukazy* to be introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science under Minister Livanov. This mechanism was implemented in the form of an "effectiveness monitoring" used to identify institutions with low performance based on centrally collected data (Froumin, I. et al., 2014). The monitoring is based on a number of indicators measuring teaching effectiveness, research, faculty, infrastructure, finance, labor market outcomes of graduates, as well as the extent of internationalization. Indicators include the average EGE score of the students enrolled in state-funded places; the volume of R&D expenditure per faculty member; the proportion of foreign students; the university's income from all sources per faculty member; and the total area of classrooms and laboratories per student[34]. The indicators used to measure HEI effectiveness were in part based on such projects as *u-Map*, the precursor to *u-multirank* and thus represent an internationally comparable inputs-outputs approach, but without significant adjustment to local contexts (e.g. profile of HEI, differentiation of financial sources, regional diversity).

HEIs which do not meet performance standards set by the Ministry of Education and Science are labelled as 'ineffective' and investigated by Rosobrnadzor. If sufficient shortcomings are found, HEIs are either merged with other institutions, partially restructured or lose their license or accreditation and are closed altogether in a so-called "optimization" process.

> *"The monitoring is a continuation of the policy [of withdrawing accreditation]. The Monitoring [sends] signals to universities and supervisory bodies, including Rosobrnadzor, and for the ministry to take action. These decisions are either to close down a university or to merge it" (Interview RU No. 8, 2017)*

The *Maiskie ukazy* had foreseen only a period of four months for the development of the monitoring. When the first edition was launched, it was heavily criticized for not having been developed in consultation with the professional community (Interview RU No. 14, 2017) and met with resistance especially from among the Russian Academy of Sciences, and representatives of small and specialized HEIs. Some criticism was directed at the supposedly western origin of indicator-based monitoring which is perceived and rejected for the same reasons as the other excellence initiatives and Russia's accession to the Bologna Process (Telegina & Schwengel, 2012). But criticism was also voiced for other reasons: The universities which were closed usually had successfully passed state accreditation before. There had not been a public debate about the indicators. It was unclear how were they interpreted and according to which cut-off criteria HEIs were deemed "ineffective"? The measures were applied to all HEIs alike, disregarding the specificities of small and specialized HEIs, branches or remote geography. Some of the complaints were successively taken into account, but the monitoring remained a powerful instrument in

[34] For the full list of indicators see http://indicators.miccedu.ru/monitoring/attach/%D0%90%D0%9A-30_05%D0%B2%D0%BD_30.03.2015.pdf

the hand of Rosobrnadzor and the MoES. It is notable that even though the monitoring had been mandated by a binding presidential decree, the president did not render political support to this unpopular measure (Interview RU No. 16, 2017).

Until the 2012 law on education, state accreditation had focused on the institutional level. Since the new law on education came into effect in 2013, state accreditation exclusively referred to study programs, which are assessed on their compliance with the FSES while still taking into account characteristics of the institution (ENQA, 2014a). Since September 2014, student surveys on learning conditions must also be conducted as part of state accreditation (ENQA, 2014a). The list of indicators for accreditation is developed by NAA and approved by the order of *Rosobrnadzor* (NAA, 2015b). The indicators are derived from and intended to reflect the contents of the federal standards. Under the new law, it also became impossible for HEIs to change their status (institute, academy, or university), which had to be applied for by their founding bodies, e.g. ministries, regions or private founders.

Since 2012, decisions by Rosobrnadzor had resulted in mergers and liquidations of a large number of HEIs and an even higher number of branches. In 2014, Rosobrnadzor closed 357 HEIs and branches. In the first half of 2015 151 Russian HEIs and branches had their license withdrawn, 34 lost their accreditation[35]. According to the Federal Statistics Service, the number of HEIs decreased from 1134 in the 2008/09 academic year to 950 in the 2014/15 academic year, that is, 184 HEIs ceased to exist.

6.2.4.3 The new excellence initiative: The "5/100" Program

Redoubling on the goals of the National Research University program, the presidential decree 599 from May 7, 2012 and the State Program for the Development of Education (Ministry of Education and Science of Russia, 2012) laid out the task of having at least five Russian universities in the top one hundred in global university rankings by 2020. To achieve this ambitious goal, a multi-year program called the "5/100 program" was launched. Among other goals, program universities were expected to increase their research output and its international visibility as well as significantly the number of international students (to 15%) and international academic staff (to 10%) by 2020.

The outcome of the project should be the formation of a group of modernized flagship universities with an effective governance structure, high international visibility and academic reputation, which promote education, help to preserve national elites within Russia, develop professional competences of an international standard, promote science and innovation, and act as centers of development of the national higher education system. In comparison to the National Research University program, the funding for each participating HEI was increased three times as compared to the research universities program, and the number of participating HEIs reduced from 29 to 15 (later 21). Participating universities received

[35] https://www.ucheba.ru/article/1041

greater autonomy in how to spend the program money, while their progress along their university development programs is monitored each year by a special *Council on Global Competitiveness Enhancement of Russian Universities*, which also reviewed the university strategic development programs, which are submitted by HEIs for the 5-100 competition. HEIs that do not meet the goals laid out in their development plans can be expelled from the program. The Council itself consists of 12 members, six from Russia and six from among the international academic community and was chaired by Russian Minister of Education and Science.

Summary

Without a doubt, the Federal University Program, the National Research University Program and the 5/100 program has begun to transform the leading segment of the Russian higher education system. They designated a group of Russian universities first of 41 institutions (less than 4 % of the total number of universities), and later to an even smaller group of leaders with the 5/100 program (which included first 15, later 21 HEIs). This financial differentiation going on in the Russian higher education system become clearly visible in the overall allocation of state funding to HEIs: While overall state funding for higher education had increased since 2000, in 2014 expenses were reduced for the first time. This holds true for all HEIs except Moscow and Saint Petersburg State Universities, the Federal Universities and the National Research universities, among which were 15 (since 2016: 21) are also participants of the 5/100 project), which saw an increase of up to 32% in funding and, by 2015, accounted for 42,5% of all State funding for higher education (Abankina, I., Filatova, & Vynaryk, 2016).

While the projects strongly invigorating the research capacity of the participating universities (Chirikov, 2015), they also transformed the governance of this sector of universities. All participating HEIs were required to change their statutes to "autonomous institution" (AU). The National Research universities and the participants of the 5/100 program needed to undergo periodic evaluations by international expert consortia. The goal of improving their research performance and output led to significant changes to their internal organization and governance in the form of new academic units (e.g. schools and departments in the place of chairs, appointment of directors of institutes and department by the rector, instead of elections by faculty councils, and the use of effective contracts and key performance indicators to measure activity and outputs). Early indicators of research productivity show an impact of the program as well: The share of publications by Russian researchers from HEIs supported by the 5-100 program top quartile journals indexed in the Web of Science was at close to 40 percent in 2015, up from 10 percent in 2010 (Yudkevich, 2015).

Forrat (2015) argues that these programs served to create a class-society in competition between and within segments of the higher education system, preventing cooperation and coordinated political lobbying. Forrat further argued that the programs established an implicit agreement between the State and HEIs, to prevent anti-regime mobilization of students. While the leading universities are without doubt highly dependent on continued participation in these programs, Chirikov (2015) showed that there is little data to support the claim that their primary motivation was political control of the student body and discards this thesis as highly implausible.

6.2.4.4 Introduction of Boards of Trustees

In 2011, by presidential order, boards of trustees (*popechitelskiye sovety*) were established at all HEIs. These boards primarily established to involve employers in the development of study programs and in supporting HEIs. Boards of trustees would include representatives of the founder (in most cases – the

line ministry), of employers, of executive authorities of regional and local authorities, as well as representatives of other organizations chosen by the HEI. Boards of trustees did not gain any formal decision-making powers. Rather, they were meant to act as coordination bodies between HEIs, local business, regional and local authorities and served, to a degree, to gain or maintain ties with and patronage of powerful individuals in business and politics for the universities (Interview RU No. 16, 2017). For example, different deputy heads of the presidential administration have presided over the board of Trustees of the Higher School of Education in Moscow while Alexei Kudrin, one of the informal leader of the "liberal camp" in the Russian political establishment is a board member of the liberal European University of St. Petersburg.

6.2.4.5 The role of professional public accreditation expands in the law on education without legal consequences

The 1992 law on education for the first time explicitly mentioned public accreditation. The 2012 revision added public-professional accreditation, public accreditation, and independent quality assessment as additional quality assurance instruments besides the official state accreditation. As with state accreditation since 2012, public-professional accreditation is exclusively granted at the study program level. While public-professional accreditation is no substitute for state accreditation, its results are supposed to be taken into account by Rosobnadzor, without specifying in which way. The law thus recognized the existence and activity of the private agencies and associations which had appeared during the 2000ies and were conducting their own activities in the field of accreditation but stopped short of giving them any form of legal recognition.

The former *Rosakkredagentstvo* staff which had left the agency in 2009, founded the *National Center of Public Accreditation* (Natsakkredtsentr) in Yoshkar-Ola. Platforms such as the *Guild of experts in the field of vocational education* (2006) and annual expert forums continue based on the new agency. State grants to develop technology for the internet-based assessment of learning outcomes and online exams in vocational education (FEPO), accreditations of HEIs, and international projects have support its continued activities (Motova, 2015). By 2017, NCPA had become a full member of INQAAHE, ENQA, APQN, CEENQA and was officially listed in EQAR. From the point of view of the overall governance of the Russian HE system, however, independent accreditation never developed any real significance.

6.2.4.6 Reform of the HEI financing mechanism

In 2010 the Russian parliament had adopted a law turning public sector organizations into "autonomous providers of public services" (Forrat, 2012a). The key idea was that the government would no longer be directly responsible for public sector organizations as such but would reimburse services delivered to citizens. In return, they would be allowed to keep any additional revenues and dispose over these funds

as they pleased. This had been implemented for "autonomous universities" since 2006 but only few HEIs had chosen to change their status fearing financial cuts.

In 2011, due to the demographic decline and financial crisis, State policy in higher education became focused on consolidating financial, material and technical, and intellectual resources in the Russian Higher Education system (Abankina, I. et al., 2016). As one measure, the system of distribution state funding for HE was changed. Prior to 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science established the number of state funded "budget places" per discipline and university. Since 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science distributes budget-funded places in a special procedure (*raspedelenie kontrolnih tsifr priema*) involving a public competition, in which state-accredited HEIs may bid for study places funded by the federal budget in specific areas of study (Klyachko, T. & Sinelnikov-Murylev, 2012). Addition restrictions on the kind of universities which were allowed to bid for state-funded places affected many HEIs such as engineering universities, which were to be barred from offering study programs in social sciences.

The yearly process of distribution of study places includes several steps. It is based on an estimation of the current and future needs for specialists according to 55 fields of training (*napravleniya*), which is calculated by the labor and government authorities of the Russian regions and entered into an electronic system. On the basis of these predictions, the MoES creates a proposal for the number of government-funded study places, taking into consideration government policy and demographic developments[36]. Since 2013, this proposal is then discussed by so-called "centers of responsibility" (*tsentry otvetstvennosti*), which are working groups of 5-10 people, representing large companies, universities and other experts working with or in areas related to one of the 55 fields of training, e.g. medical sciences, physics, etc. All *centers of responsibility* come together and discuss and negotiate the Ministry's proposal and need to come to an agreement on the distribution of state-funded places across fields of study. Based on this distribution and the cost of different fields of study, the ministry creates a plan. In a next steps HEIs apply for study places. Based on the results of a ranking based on the same indicators used in the efficiency monitoring of HEIs, the ministry distributes state-funded study places among HEIs. Thus, the HEI with the highest-ranking position receives places with the highest priority. If HEIs applied for more places than are "available", those with the lowest results on the efficiency monitoring are not granted places, and, in consequence, public funding. The actual funding is based by the number of students actually enrolled by HEIs, taking further into account "regional coefficients"[37] and coefficients for the mode of study (full-time/part-time).

Regions assessment of need by regions	Until November

[36] The government defines as a policy, what percentage of the population should study on a state-subsidized basis, typically in the range of 400-800/10.000 population

[37] Taking into consideration the cost of living and bonuses to individuals working in the North of the countries, etc.

Discussion of distribution of state funded study places among employers and experts	November and December
Calculation of "state order" by MoES	December
State order is published by MoES	January
Bidding for state order by HEIs.	February
HEIs get informed about results	April
HEIs enroll students	August
HEIs report actual enrollment and get compensated	September

Table 15: 2013 procedure of distribution of State Order for study places in Russian Federation

The 2013 model is noteworthy for that for the first time, the normative costs of a study place were differentiated in three categories according to specialty (area of training) and level of higher education (BA, MA, PhD). Also, private HEIs for the first time became eligible to participate, although their number and share of students was capped. When they first became eligible, private HEIs accounted for about 1,5% of all state funded places. As private accepting state-funded students HEIs need to accept lower limits on tuition fees for paying students and pass an "effectiveness assessment", many choose to not apply and the number of budget-funded places at private HEIs has been dropping since then. Aside from a few exceptions, private HEIs do generally not receive public money (Interview RU No. 12, 2017). The system established a quasi-market, in which HEIs compete for study places as well as for students to fill them. Students likewise compete for study-places at the most prestigious HEIs which promotes their position on their "quality of student intake" as measured by EGE results. This market is tilted towards the most elite HEIs which participate in state targeted funding programs, which increases the funding they can invest in becoming attractive to students as well their prestige. Since state funding via a per-student system is by far the most important source of funding for most state HEIs, the demographic decline in combination with the support for a small number of elite HEIs represents a significant risk for the large majority of regional HEIs destined to suffer funding contractions. Without greater government subsidies via increased basic funding or participating in special government programs, it seems inevitable that many regional HEIs will be forced to consolidate programs or even cease operations (Abankina, I. et al., 2016). There is relatively widespread suspicion of the factual objectivity of the assignment of study places (Interview RU No. 16, 2017), but it has not been possible to substantiate these suspicions.

6.3 The governance model of the Russian HE system by 2015

After 25 years of transformation since the break-up of the Soviet Union, a new distinct model of governance of the Russian Higher Education system has emerged. While during the 1990ies, the state had

withdrawn in a lot of areas from steering the HE system, since the 2000, the Russian government successively created an array of new steering instruments giving the MoES significant powers to regulate the higher education system.

Development of differentiated state steering mechanisms of the higher education system

Via the **Unified State Exam (EGE)** and the system of **allocation of state-funded study places**, the state can regulate the overall size of enrollment, as well as determine priority areas of enrollment. **State licensing and accreditation** were transformed from relatively impartial instruments of verifying compliance with regulation into a powerful instrument of state steering and control in the hands of Rosobnadzor and – by extension – the MoES. As Rosobnadzor received the right to revoke a license at any time and has discretion over how rigorous to apply existing norms and accreditation criteria, this is a very high concentration of power. HEIs can only resort to courts to challenge Rosobrnadzor's decisions with uncertain outcomes. The **government efficiency monitoring** (since 2012) provides a wealth of indicator data based on which Rosobrnadzor conducts controls and can (and does) revoke licenses and accreditation of HEIs. The power to conduct unscheduled controls and therefore the constant latent threat of legal sanctions gives the state the means to intervene at any HEI, either as an instrument of long-term strategy, or as a (rare) emergency response to political threats (Forrat, 2012a). A more **focused use of resources** has created a **differentiated model of governance** for the different tiers of an increasingly vertically differentiated HE system: The top-tier (*Federal Universities, National Research Universities, 5/100-Universities, Flagship Universities*) receive additional funding for the implementation of ambitious development programs, which have often been developed with the help of external consultants. In return for receiving additional funding, HEIs which are participating in the targeted Federal programs are required to change their status into autonomous institutions and need to submit to a new monitoring and evaluation regime.

In order to be included in these programs, HEIs need to change their statutes to autonomous institutions (AU) and in some cases switch of a system of appointing rectors (e.g. Federal Universities, Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities). The substantive funding, the close indicator-based monitoring, and the additional powers of the university leadership have a fundamental impact on the institutional behavior. Licensing and Accreditation, as well as the effectiveness monitoring are not really relevant for these universities, as they perform well on these instruments anyway or can operate according to their own standards altogether (in the case of Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities). As they rank very high on indicator systems and enjoy strong political support, they usually also get awarded very high numbers of state-funded study places in the bidding system for the state order, in addition to non-budget students who are prepared to pay often considerable tuition fees. The "price" these universities pay is that they experience more individual attention from government about how and for which results they use their funds.

The lower-tier HEIs, on the other hand, do not only have to prove their compliance with licensing and accreditation requirements which, since the 2010s, have been applied in an increasingly restrictive manner. In addition, they need to prove their "efficiency" in the government efficiency monitoring or risk being merged with other HEIs in the vicinity or even closed altogether. Less-than-positive performance on the monitoring indicators also puts them at risk to lose out on state funding, as, since 2013, HEIs have to bid for an increasingly scarce "state-order" of study places and these are awarded to the better performing HEIs first. Minimal EGE scores that students need to meet to be admitted to HE at all (which are established by the MoES) in combination with declining student numbers due to demography mean that attracting fee-paying students is also increasingly difficult for less attractive HEIs. In addition, also HEIs not participating in targeted funding programs, report pressure from the side of the MoES to change their statutes so that rectors would be nominated by the founder (in this case: the corresponding ministries) rather than elected by the academic council. The increased organizational autonomy and thus power in the hands of rectors thus translates into a greater power potential for the MoES which has (through the above-mentioned instruments) considerable sway over rectors and through them over HEIs.

The following figure illustrates the dynamics of this system:

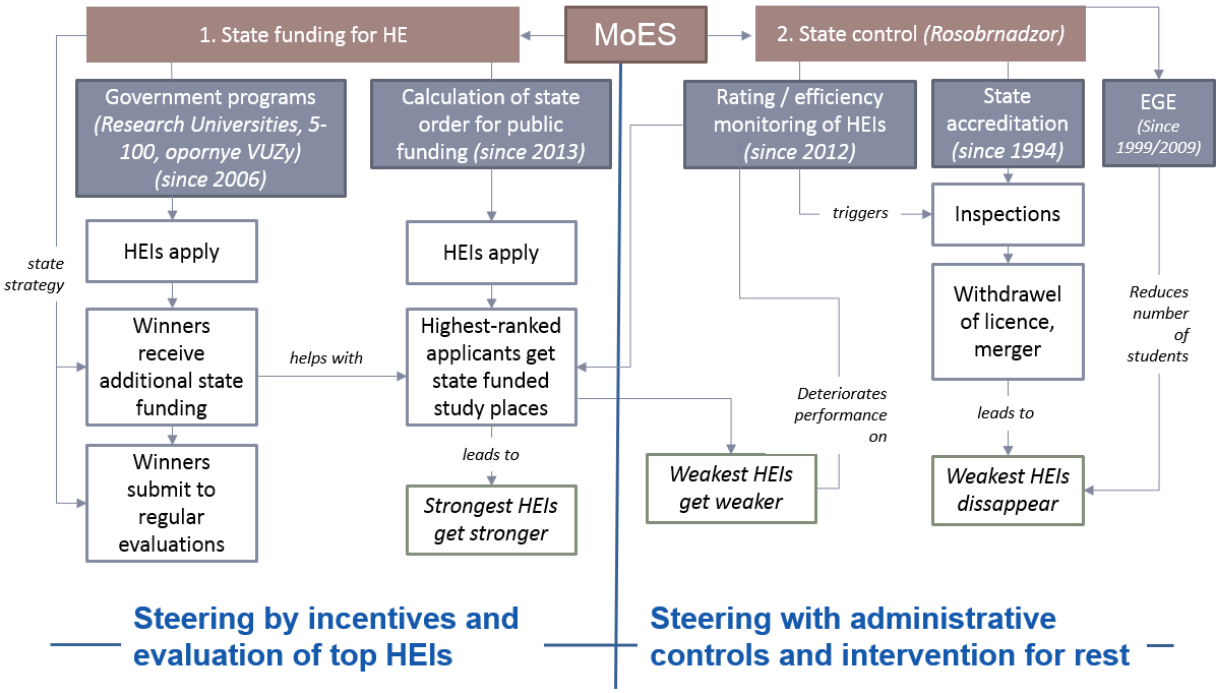

Figure 13: The differentiated model of governance of higher education system in the Russian Federation by 2015

These developments clearly reflect a changed focus away from a one-size-fits-all approach towards a higher education policy of supporting a limited number of universities while controlling the remaining part of the sector.

While the MoES increasingly recentralized power over the HE system in its own hands, the format chosen for stakeholder involvement were advisory structures, which provided deliberation spaces for discussing policy and steering decisions with employers, regional representatives and representatives of the academic community, and other experts, but which had a strictly advisory role. The format of choice for these structures in the Russian HE system were the so-called "state-public" associations or organizations, which the state financially and organizationally supported and which it used to get feedback from stakeholder groups such as unions, professional associations, scientific and other societies, research associations, teaching and methodological associations or various councils and commissions. In 2004, the Council on State Educational Standards of Professional Education was created to involve representatives of employer associations to a greater degree in the development of State Standards for Higher education. The MoES also increased stakeholder involvement in the process of distribution of study places by involving regional authorities and business and university representatives in so-called “centers of responsibility” (*tsentry otvetstvennosti*). In addition, the MoES as well as the Presidential Administration maintain a number of advisory councils in which policy issues are discussed, but which have no decision-making power. Their activity is closely coordinated and supervised by the MoES.

As the **level of control over the leadership of the HEIs has greatly increased** since 1992, institutional autonomy of HEIs (or at least of rectors vis-à-vis their HEIs) has significantly substantially expanded as state regulation of day-to-day operations was reduced: With each generation of the State standards, curricular autonomy broadened as the amount of detailed prescription of subjects and disciplines was reduced. In HR matters such as hiring teaching staff and the possibility to use shorter-term "effective contracts" based on key performance indicators to measure activity and outputs) shifted the power distribution within HEIs clearly towards the rector. Initiatives such as the election of rectors by governing boards in autonomous institutions further strengthen the position of rectors vis-à-vis their HEIs. Since 2006/2013, HEIs (and their rectors) enjoy greater financial autonomy over lump sum budgets and thus greater freedom of action to develop and implement individual institutional strategies.

By the 2000ies, rectors had mostly consolidated their power and it became rare that elections were seriously contested or lost (Interview RU No. 16, 2017). After the government had reasserted its authority over rectoral elections, effectively appointing rectors after 2006, the "power vertical" increasingly made itself felt also within HEIs. Academic councils lost their governance function in most areas but curricular matters, while rectors gained in authority vis-à-vis professors. The introduction of "effective contracts" tied staff salaries to reaching certain performance indicators which the HEI's leadership has the power to specify. New academic units that are formed (e.g. schools and departments in the place of chairs), their heads were appointed by the rector, rather than elected by faculty councils. Both developments (stronger central control by the State combined with greater powers to HEI leaderships) are particularly true for HEIs participating in targeted funding programs (Federal Universities, Research Universities, 5/100), as all participating HEIs were required to change their statutes to "autonomous institution" (AU).

Individual professors have arguably lost most in terms of authority within the governance of the HE system. During the 1990ies, they had been relatively autonomous. There had been large gains in curricular autonomy within the framework of the FSES. Powers were divested to the department level and heads of departments would now be elected by professors. The election of rectors by academic councils gave faculty a say in questions concerning the whole institution. With each version of the FSES, academics gained greater curricular autonomy. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that HEIs had been underfunded and salaries were so small that universities could be thankful that professors continued to teach. During the 1990ies this was often only possible due to idealism and the fact, that other sources of funding were accessible in the form of private tutoring, the renting out of university spaces and, in some cases, income from corruption.

The following table summarizes aspects of the Russian model of governance in 2015.

Changes in the relationship between HEIs and the state
State is highly active in policy-setting. State supervising, steering from a distance and ex-post control is visible for top tier of HE system

Strong state control and intervention for the lower tier		
Quality Assurance	**Institutional Governance and Autonomy**	**Financing higher education**
Study programs contents regulated by Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) External evaluation and control of performance by licensing & accreditation and effectiveness monitoring Independent accreditation welcomed but optional National ranking of HEIs	Considerable power of HE leadership further expended Appointment by state-dominated governing boards or the President in AUs, de-facto appointment of rectors by MoES in others Power to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff with HEI leadership Advisory boards and state-dominated governance boards Power of HEI leadership to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff	lump-sum budgets and financial autonomy for AU, line-item budgets for other state HEIs Competitive mechanism of allocating state-funded study places Competitive participation in government-programs (RU, 5-100, flagship universities) Competition for students to fill places Income-diversification from tuition-fees and other sources
Regulation of access to HE		
Centralized testing with EGE		

Table 16: Elements of governance model of Russian System of Higher Education by 2015

7 The Republic of Kazakhstan

7.1 Introduction

Kazakhstan is the world's largest landlocked country, roughly the size of Western Europe and the ninth largest country in the world. In 2015, the total population was 17,165,000, divided into 131 ethnic groups, including Kazakhs (63% of the population[38]), Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars, Uighurs, and others. Kazakhstan is a secular multi-confessional country, with the most widespread religions being Islam and Christianity. The State Language are Kazakh and Russian, which is most commonly used in public Organizations and local self-government bodies. Kazakhstan is an upper-middle income country with a GDP per capita of about $ 13,000 (2013).

Due to its abundant natural resources in oil, gas and minerals, Kazakhstan is not only by far the largest, but also the economically dominant nation of Central Asia, generating 60% of the region's GDP. The territory of what today comprises Kazakhstan was historically inhabited by nomadic tribes and gained a first form of organized statehood in the 13th century it became part of the Mongolian Empire under Genghis Khan. It reverted to being inhabited mostly by nomadic tribes, the dominant of which were the Kazakh. Russia began colonizing the Kazakh steppe in the 18th century, and by the mid-19th century, nominally ruled all of Kazakhstan as part of the Russian Empire. After the 1917 Russian Revolution, the territories of Central Asia were reorganized several times. Kazakhstan found its current borders in 1936 as the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, part of the Soviet Union. In the referendum of 17 March 1991 on the future of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, as the other Central Asian republics overwhelmingly voted in favor of the unity of the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union collapsed later that year, Kazakhstan was the last of the Soviet republics to declare independence. The current President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, has been leader of the country ever since.

Higher education in Kazakhstan appeared first during the 1920s (Froumin et al. 2014; Kyzykeyeva and Oskolkova 2011) in the form of 20 HEIs focused on teacher training, agriculture and medicine (Dzholdasbekov and Kuznetsov 1975), and was further expanded during the 1930ies (Ahn, Dixon, & Chekmareva, 2018). By 1989, there were fifty-five HEIs in the Kazakh SSR which enrolled 287,400 students (Ahn et al., 2018).

[38] With a considerably higher percentage among younger age cohorts

7.2 The development of the governance of the higher education system in Kazakhstan

Electoral period	*President's Party/Coalition*	*President*	*Prime Minister(s)*	*Minister(s) of Education/Science*
1991-1994	Independent	Nursultan Nazarbayev	Sergey Tereshchenko (1991-1994)	Shaysultan Shayakhmetov (1987-1993)
1994-1999	People's Union of Kazakhstan Unity	Nursultan Nazarbayev	Akezhan Kazhegeldin (1994-1997) Nurlan Balgimbayev (1997-1999)	Yerezhep Mambetkaziyev (1993-1995) Murat Zhurinov (1995-1997) Imangali Tasmagambetov (1997) Krymbek Kusherbayev (1997-1999) Vladimir Shkol'nik (1999)
1999-2016	Otan / Nur Otan	Nursultan Nazarbayev	Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (1999-2002) Imangali Tasmagambetov (2002-2003) Daniyal Akhmetov (2003-2007) Karim Massimov (2007-2012) Serik Akhmetov (2012-2014) Karim Massimov (2014-2016) Bakhytzhan Sagintayev (2016-)	Krymbek Kusherbaev (1999-2000) Nuraly Bekturganov (2000-2002) Shamsha Berkimbaeva (2002-2003) Zhaksybek Kulekeev (2003-2004) Byrganym Aitimova (2004-2007)

				Zhanseit Tuymenbayev (2007-2010 Bakhytzhan Zhumagulov (2010-2013) Aslan Sarinzhipov (2013-2016) Erlan Sagadiyev (2016-)

Table 17: Overview of ruling parties, prime ministers, and ministers of education in Kazakhstan 1991-2017

7.2.1 Establishing statehood and institutions (1991-1999)

In the all-Union referendum on the future of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan, like all Central Asian countries, had overwhelmingly voted in favour of remaining within the Soviet Union. When the Soviet Union did collapse nonetheless, the economic shock which hit all post-Soviet republics after independence did not spare Kazakhstan. The devastating economic fallout of the break-up of the Soviet Union left the young State in a precarious situation. Between 1991 and 1995, real GDP fell by 39% and exports collapsed (World Bank, 2005). As on all other spheres of public life, this had a detrimental effect on spending on education, which fell on absolute terms, as well as a percentage of GDP, from 6 % in 1990 to 3.5 % in 2000 (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

In educational policy and governance, the central authority in Moscow had disappeared. Central funding for higher education ceased to exist. Disciplines such as business management, market economics, and social sciences like sociology and political science did not exist yet. The bleak economic situation and economic outlook coupled with insecurity about the status of non-ethnic Kazakhs in newly independent Kazakhstan led to a massive emigration of populations to Russia, Germany (the sizable Volga-German community) and other countries. The resultant brain-drain and departure of well-trained specialists contributed to the overall decline. The first order of business for newly independent Kazakhstan was therefore to create state institutions from the ground up and assure the short- and mid-term survival of the educational system.

In 1993, the Bolashak[39] program was launched, providing high-performing students from Kazakhstan with scholarships to study at leading universities around the world, provided that they return to Kazakhstan to work for at least five years after graduation which was since gradually expanded in scope. In 1995, a new Constitution was passed, which made the titular Kazakh language as the official state language but retained Russian as “language of interethnic communication” and effectively working language in business, higher education, and politics. First attempts were made to integrate into the wider

[39] The word "Bolashak" is translated into English as "Future”

education space, when 1994, some universities experimentally began to introduce Bachelor's degrees. In 1998, an agreement was signed between the Commonwealth of Independent States, to mutually recognize higher education degrees. Kazakhstan's MoES had done much to promote this project (Zhakenov, 2007).

In October of 1997, the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev laid out a vision for the country titled "Kazakhstan 2030" on economic development, social and government reform, beginning the practice of increasingly sophisticated strategic planning and 5- and 10-year plans in all areas of government.

7.2.1.1 Basic architecture of higher education governance is established (1991-1994)

A new legal framework was formulated in the laws "On Education'' in 1992 and ''On Higher Education'' in 1993 which regulated the overall operations of HEIs (Brunner & Tillett, 2007). These laws, along with other regulations and standards created a regulatory structure for the higher education system, mostly maintaining, however, the centralized control that had existed under the Soviet regime (Ahn et al., 2018). After independence, the ministry of national education (*ministerstvo narodnogo obrazovaniya)* was founded, which managed primary, secondary, technical professional education. A state-level committee on HE had existed within the Kazakh SSR since 1959, which became the foundation for the Kazakhstani Ministry of Education and Science (*ministerstvo vysshego obrazovaniya I nauki* - MoES) (Kyzykeyeva & Oskolkova, 2011). The first structure thus conserved the Soviet division between the Ministry of Higher Education (*ministerstvo vyshego obrazovaniya*) and the "Enlightenment Ministry" (*ministerstvo prosvysheniya CCCR*). This structure remained in place until 1999.

7.2.1.2 Tuition fees are introduced and private higher education booms

With the economy in decline, market reforms in the making and public coffers empty, the Law on Higher Education in 1993 allowed state HEIs to enroll students on a tuition-fee basis and allowed the creation of private HEIs. In addition, the state itself, finding itself unable to fund these institutions, privatized a number of HEIs, often to their staff or third-party investors. As a former academic and minister of education comments:

> *"When we became independent, there was no money in the budget. We had to build borders, we had to form a diplomatic corps, there was a crisis, there was not money, for 5-6 years, it was very difficult. Businesses closed down, there was mass unemployment, and no tax income. We started to close many HEIs, many colleges, because we could not close schools, pupils have to study somewhere. We started to hand over institutes to private hands, started to close down colleges. Higher education we almost completely passed into private hands. We almost gave these universities away for free. We wanted there to be ownership of these universities." (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)*

The liberalization of private HEIs at a time when state structures for quality assurance and regulation did not yet work led to an explosion in the number of private HEIs (Ahn et al., 2018). During the 1990ies, the number of HEIs rose from 55 in 1989 to 170 in 2000, the majority of which in Almaty, the biggest city and former capital. By 1998, there were 111 HEIs which were categorized as non-public, out of 165 total HEIs in Kazakhstan (Brunner & Tillett, 2007).

Nevertheless, economic times were challenging for public as well as for private HEIs and had to scramble to make ends meet, sometimes at the expense of quality:

> *"These universities started to train specialists on a fee-basis. Their also did not have the money to maintain building, pay their staff well, which is why they opened branches." (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)*

7.2.1.3 Standard study programs and, licensing and attestion are established (1994-1998)

State standards and typical study plans are developed

In 1994, the MoES began to organize the development of joint standards in higher education. "Typical study plans "(*typovye uchebnye plany* - TUP) were developed, a task that was delegated to teaching-methodological associations (*uchebno-metodicheskie ob'edineniya* - UMO), associations of all universities offering a certain study program. UMOs were hosted by a specific "profile" HEI which was regarded as the leading center for this area of studies[40], and which would be responsible for the development of the study plans. The first resulting TUP determined roughly 90% of subjects in standardized study programs. They prescribed in which semester which course should be thought, which didactical format should be used, the form of exams, and how many hours each course should be taught.

At the same time, the development of State Standards for Higher Education began. State standards comprised TUP but contained further common standards regarding the structure and contents of the education process. They were successively developed for each study program foreseen in the official list of State Classifiers. The standards defined the intended knowledge and skills of alumni, the required subjects and their key contents, and the forms of assessment. Between 1995-1997, standards for 310 study programs of higher education were developed and in 1996, a classificator (list) of higher education programs was released (Zhakenov, 2007).

The first TUP and State Standards were thus developed by leading universities, on the basis of a decision by the MoES. The first generation of standards was developed without formal involvement of employers' or other stakeholders. As other universities were not permitted to deviate from the core elements of the Standard, this gave the universities developing the standards for its field, a large degree of power

[40] E.g. study plans for economic specialties would be developed by Narkhoz University, Social Science specialties by the Kazakh National University, and teacher training programs by Ablai Khan University

over the curriculum in the entire country, while lacking strong incentives to modernize their own curriculum. Possibly as a result, the World Bank/OECD review of 2007 found that standards and curriculum materials were "in need of serious modernization", especially in the areas of social sciences (World Bank & OECD, 2007). Nevertheless, the TUP and state standards provided a first orientation for HEIs after the central authorities in Moscow had disappeared. The new institutions re-created the Soviet structures of centralized curricular design which HEIs were used to expect to operate.

Government licensing and attestation

The MoES also established a system of government licensing and attestation for quality assurance. After the model of the Soviet-era Higher Attestation Commission (*VAK*), a *Committee for Supervision and Attestation in Education and Science*[41] *(CCES)* was founded which would be responsible for the supervision and attestation of all HEIs in the country. In order to operate, all HEIs were required to receive a license from the CCES. To do so, they needed to meet minimal standards regarding facilities, qualified staff and were required to document that they operated in accordance with the State Educational Standard. For those HEIs who have been granted a license to operate, state attestation procedures were now being carried out every five years in order to assess whether HEIs operated according to the state standards. In case attestation is not granted, the HEI's license is withdrawn and the rector of the HEI is liable to administrative proceedings. While the initial chaotic growth of HEIs and study programs had eschewed regulation, by 1996, the vast majority of HEIs had been brought under the supervision of MoES (McLendon, 2004).

By 1999, a highly centralized and system of regulation of the educational content had been established. Highly detailed TUP had been developed for all subjects which all HEIs had to followed. The only exception was the Kazakh National Al Farabi University, which had a special autonomy status and retained the right to develop their own study programs and issue their own diplomas.

7.2.2 Curbing corruption and saddling the market (1999-2004)

This economic downwards trend was reversed only in 2000, when the economy recovered, driven in part by reforms and in large part by rising commodity prices from which the oil and mining sectors profited. However, even as the economy slowly began to recover, governmental spending on higher education continued to decline (Brunner & Tillett, 2007).

In 1999, The Law on Education was revised. The new law laid out a new institutional framework on all aspects of the governance of the higher education system. On the one hand, it introduced market-based principles to state funding of HEIs via the introduction of a voucher-like system of study grants. On the

[41] The Committee was later renamed into "Committee for Control in Education and Science". For the sake of clarity, I will only use CCES as abbreviation throughout the chapter.

other hand, it increased state control over access to higher education through a centralized school-leaving exam and increased controls of universities' academic outcomes.

7.2.2.1 Introduction of Centralized Testing for university admission

Since Soviet times, HEIs had been allowed to admit students based on their institutional specialization and the student's academic background and performance[42]. By the end of the 1999ies, however, the general impression of this system was one of corruption (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017).

Already in 1992, a "*National Testing Center*" had been set up, which was tasked with developing different forms of national assessment of education on different levels. In 1999, however, in order to address the general lack of transparency in the university admission process and eradicate the possibility of corruption in university admissions, the MoES developed the *Complex Test (CT)*, the first version of what would later become known as the *Unified National Test* (*Edinoe Nacional'noe Testirovanie - UNT*)[43]. The test was developed in the form of a three hour exam administered to all school leavers wishing to enroll to higher education and replaced the individual admissions procedures at universities (Winter, 2014). The first version of the tests were launched in 1999 and were then successively rolled out to all Kazakh schools until 2004 with testing centers being established throughout the country. The *National Testing Center* was reorganized into the *National Centre of State Standards for Education and Tests (NCSSES)* as a subsidiary of the MoES, which became responsible for developing standards and tests, as well as for administering the centralized testing. In 2004, the "complex test" in which only students applying to HEIs had participated, was transformed into the "Unified National Test" (*Edinnoe natsional'noe testirovanie*) which every student had to take obligatorily upon graduation from school.

The new test established state control over HEI admission in a number of ways. First and foremost, as HEIs lost the authority over enrollment testing, they lost a source of income and a source of potential corruption in preparing for or helping to pass entrance examinations. Secondly, the state could now set a minimum passing score on the central exams. No HEIs could enroll students who had scored lower than this threshold. Thirdly, state financing of HEIs was reformed, which incentivized HEIs to invest in their quality and reputation (see below). Finally, having comparable test data gave the MoES information on the performance of schools and regions, as well as on the attractiveness of HEIs, which could be used for monitoring and targeted intervention (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017).

As a former minister of education explains his rationale on the introduction of centralized testing for university admission:

> *"Quality begins with the quality of selection [of students] and the quality of secondary school education. This is why we developed a number of instruments of quality assessment of schools.*

[42] During Soviet times, the number of available study places had been the limiting factor
[43] The first edition was called simply "complex testing" (*kompleksnoe testirovanie*)

Maybe the tests have their faults but at the same time, they are the most objective instruments. They eradicate corruption. [..] You know, we have a very specific economy where administrative influence is very strong because we have elements of an authoritarian regime and when somebody [powerful] says something, subordinates will set out right away to implement it. If we did not have the [centralized] testing, I do not know what would have been. The akim [mayor] or some public servant, or public prosecutor or the police would just dictate "admit my son, or that other son". Now nobody messes with this process. This is why we now more or less objectively admit students." (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)

7.2.2.2 Introduction of a money-follows-students grant system in HE financing

In parallel to the introduction of centralized testing for university admission, the government completely overhauled the system of public financing for higher education. Before 1999 all State HEIs used to receive a yearly "admittance plan" (*plan priema*) with a certain number of state-funded study places per discipline. In 1999, this was replaced by a system of voucher-like grants which students were awarded based on their complex test (CT) and later UNT results. This shifted financing approach from "object-oriented financing" (*"finansirovanie obektov"*) in which HEIs were provided with line-item budgets to "subject-based financing" ("*finansirovanie subektov obrazovaniya"*) of students (Kalanova, S. & Omirbayev, 2009) based on merit-based grant system (Brunner & Tillett, 2007)[44]. This system was the result of a study of different countries, among them Turkey (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017). The result was described by its developers as *"revolutionary […] because it confirmed that the intake of HEIs was not be based anymore on the numbers of the government order, but on the basis of centralized testing." (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017).* The new system of public financing which emerged in 1999, worked the following way:

In order to establish the number of state funds, each year, the government determines the number of state-funded study places per discipline (the so-called "state order"). The MoES does this on the basis of the projected number of needed specialists by fields. *"The Republican Commission on the distribution of grants*", consisting of rectors of HEIs, representatives of Ministries and trade unions, announces how many grants there will be for which study programs. Students become eligible for state grants on the basis of their scores on the Unified National Test if they chose study programs which are included in national or regional priorities. After learning about available grants, students then chose a study program and an HEI and apply to the Republican Commission for a grant. Based on the applicant's grades the commission distributes the grants, students enroll in HEI and HEIs receive funding from Ministry. Since state grants are given only for the study of priority fields, which are selected by the MoES, the state thus

[44] Special preference is given to students from rural backgrounds, disabled students, orphans and Kazakh diaspora (mainly from China). For these groups, who on average score lower on centralized testing, special quotas exist, within which they compete against each other for admission. The highest scoring students from among the disadvantaged groups therefore receive privileged admission into HEI.

gained an important instrument to steer funding towards certain disciplines, while delegating the choice of a specific HEI to students.

To make higher education more accessible for students who had not been able to secure a grant, the government provided state-backed education loans (*"gossudarstvennye obrazovatel'nye kredity"*). These were granted for 5 years, were free of interest and had to be repaid only starting one year after graduation. This system was abandoned, however, by 2004, when it turned out that many credit-holders could (or would) not pay back their loans, which were ultimately transformed into grants.

The new system had fundamental consequences for the relationship between HEIs and the State, as the traditional allocation of funds by the ministry on the basis of historical costs or negotiated sums ceased to exist and was replaced by a process of competition between HEIs to attract grant-holding students who became as much a source of funding as a sign of prestige for HEIs (World Bank & OECD, 2007). From the point of HEIs, state funding thus became a substitution for student tuition fees, which made being attractive to students all the more important. Makridi et al. (2007) point to the positive steering effects the new system brought: Students reported carefully searching for information on the quality of institutions and of career prospects as graduates, when choosing a university. Some study programs did not receive any applications from grant holding students and were forced to close down without any outside intervention, while some private universities which charge very high tuition fees accept grant students on the basis that since attracting these students increased the quality of the student body and the prestige of the university (Makridi et al., 2007).

The new system was not only praised but also criticized for different reasons: The OECD/World Bank study criticized that the process did not sufficiently involve consultation with private sector employers and was characterized by the typical challenges of centralized manpower planning in the process of establishing the distribution of grants by fields of study (World Bank & OECD, 2007). Secondly, only a small percentage of students profits from educational grants because of limited public resources for higher education. Since financing is distributed needs-blind on the basis of UNT results, it favors socio-economically privileged groups while discriminating against students from less well-to-do families (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017; OECD, 2017). The system also resulted in some adverse selection effects as it represented an incentive to students to choose their study program based on the likelihood of winning a state grant, rather than on their individual inclinations. In general, only very strong students applied to popular subjects such as law and economics, while weaker students chose less popular subjects such as teacher training and engineering as they could hope to study tuition-free in these subjects (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017).

Thirdly, because tuition fees may not undercut the rates of state grants (but may exceed them), the state also indirectly regulates the accessibility of higher education overall, as prospective students without grants have to pay tuition fees which may not be lower than state grants and, at prestigious universities, are often considerably higher.

Lastly, it should be noted, that while the income side became flexible, HEIs did not receive more autonomy on how they could spend this income. Line-item budgets remained in place and rigid, as did the very detailed reporting requirements of the MoES. State funding became fully dependent on semi-market mechanisms (e.g. the ability to attract a high number of grant-carrying students), while financial autonomy remained limited.

7.2.2.3 Saddling the market

While the introduction of the CT and UNT curbed corruption at university enrollment, and the new system of state funding incentivized stronger HEIs to invest in quality, there still remained a large segment of HEIs which fully depended on tuition fees and operated in a difficult economic environment. Most less prestigious HEIs did not enroll any grant-carrying students. The tuition fees of these less selective HEIs were therefore not bound to the level state grants which allowed them to pursue a strategy of offering low-tuition, low requirement study programs, often in branches in other cities, amounting in many cases to little more than diploma-mills (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017). In order to regulate low-quality providers of education, in the first five years, several initiatives of expanded state control were launched. The system of qualification requirements and indicators verified during attestation, grew stricter from year to year. As one senior public servant characterized the developments:

> *"This time [the beginning of the 2000's] was characterized by even more centralization of the governance system. […] Everything happened from one unified center. The Ministry strictly controlled every step. During this time, they had created standards for every specialty / study program and these strictly controlled the activity of HEIs. Their autonomy consisted of the 20%-25% of study program contents that they could design themselves. Moreover, the standards began to regulate even the very educational process. That means, the standards contained things like how many semesters there should be, maximum learning load for students, based on the sanitary norm that students should not 50 hours per week, per week not more than 36 hours in the auditoria. They started to regulate these things ever more detailedly" (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)*

The first attempt to implement state accreditation

The first such attempt was made with the introduction of state accreditation in the law on education of 2001, as a supplement to state attestation. It was modelled after Russian State accreditation (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017) and conceived mainly as an assessment of quantitative indicators (Kalanova, S., 2014). Data on quantitative indicators was to be collected by the Department of State Inspection and submitted to an Accreditation Council under the MoES. The rationale of introducing accreditation was the hope that it would be possible to reduce the number of private universities (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). The new methodology was, however prematurely implemented, as neither standards nor procedures had been developed. Within the first three days of the new procedure operating, 59 universities were accredited

(Interview KZ No. 4, 2017), but the whole system was heavily criticized by the academic community as an intransparent and ultimately pointless (ENQA, 2017). Minister Nuraly Bekturganov resigned in 2002 and state accreditation was suspended for almost a decade (ENQA, 2017).

Inspections

Possibly because accreditation did not prove an effective tool for reducing the number of private universities was not successful, it was not resumed by the next minister, Shamsha Bekimbaeva (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). Under the new minister, from January 2002, the MoES began to conduct a series of inspections of HEIs. Until 2003, 166 HEIs had were controlled, of which 12 HEIs and 32 branches were closed down, and 170 licenses for study programs had been withdrawn from 42 HEIs and 75 HEIs and 64 branches had their licenses suspended for different periods of time (Lyal'kina & Kanafina, 2016). Later, branches were made illegal altogether.

Introduction of Comprehensive National Mid-Term Tests

Even though several HEIs had been forced to cease their operations, many little selective, low-tuition HEIs continued to operate. In order to expose and regulate such HEIs, the MoES in 2003 introduced another instrument of central state control. The "Comprehensive National Mid-Term Tests" (*vneshnaya otsenka uchebnhkh dostizhenii* - VOUD) were to be conducted at all HEIs after the second year of studies. Students would be assessed on the compulsory basic disciplines as by the state standards (World Bank & OECD, 2007). If students did not reach a minimal level of knowledge, they would not be allowed to continue to study in the third year.

A former minister of this era points out that strengthening state control over higher education was without alternative to safeguard the quality of education:

> *"We developed a whole system of such barriers in order to raise the quality of specialists. But this also caused very strong resistance. The MoES also closed their eyes to many problems which is why it was necessary to introduce these things into the law. I came and woke up a lot of people and introduced a system of such barriers." (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)*

Many HEIs (and international observers) saw the growing degree of state control as increasingly overbearing. As one rector of a private university commented:

> *"Well, for us, for private universities, in the beginning, it was a period of freedom. We worked without a license for 5-6 years. Then a period of cold war began. Each year new requirements were added, on square meters, about degrees of teaching staff, the number of researchers… […] Then somebody added fire safety requirements, then sanitary and epidemiological ones. Now, in the last draft proposal, there were 514 indicators! Even nuclear power stations are checked on only 200 indicators" (Interview KZ No. 12, 2017)*

Regardless of its justification, the mid-2005ies certainly represent a high-point of state control of the higher education system in Kazakhstan, at a time when the state withdraw from micromanaging HEIs itself.

7.2.2.4 Continuing differentiation of the higher education system

Privatization of state HEIs

In 2000, following the introduction of the new money-follows-students scheme in higher education financing, the government launched a second round of privatization of public HEIs (Ahn et al., 2018). With the law "On the List of the Republican State Enterprises and Institutions to be Privatized in 2000 –01", twelve public HEIs became joint-stock companies (JSCs) in which the Kazakhstani government shared ownership with private investors. The privatized HEIs were sometimes bought by outside investors, but often by the rector or – at least in part – by professors of that university.

From the government's point of view, at the time of the transfer, privatization promised saving on future capital expenditures, short-term income from the sale of shares and long-term income from taxes of the privatized HEI (Interview KZ No. 13, 2017; Interview KZ No. 18, 2017). For the concerned universities, their new legal status brought greater independence from government administrative micro-management and restrictions (Makridi et al., 2007). The new Joint-Stock universities were governed by a board of directors/trustees overseeing the institutions' budgets. They became responsible for the buildings, were allowed to operate branch campuses and own subsidiary businesses. In terms of curricular autonomy, they were still subject to state curricular standards and ministerial guidelines in areas such as hiring (Hartley, Gopaul, Sagintayeva, & Apergenova, 2016). By 2006, 16 state institutions had become joint-stock companies (Brunner & Tillett, 2007).

Designation of national universities

While the government saved expenditures through privatization of HEIs, in 2001, it gave nine prominent HEIs the special status of "national universities"[45]. This group would benefit from greater institutional autonomy, such as the right to establish their own admission guidelines, a higher paygrade for teaching staff, higher scholarships for students, more freedom in designing their curricula vis-à-vis the state standards and the privilege of issuing their own (state-recognized) diplomas.

7.2.3 Preparing to join the Bologna Space (2005-2010)

In 1997, President Nazarbayev had announced an overall development strategy for the country upon which a number of sectoral development strategies and programs had been based. By order of the President of 11 October 2004, the first State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005-2010 (SPED 2005-2010) was passed (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan[MoES], 2004). The SPED outlined for the area of education the actions to be taken to reach the objectives outlined in the national development strategy. The SPED has a significant role orientating development priorities, as it is signed by the president and thus binding to the MoES and its changing ministers.

The SPED2005-2010 had been coordinated mostly under minister Zhaksybek Kulekeev in 2003-2004 and included a wide range of reform proposals. The SPED was extensively based on the analysis of successful international models and international trends (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). The overarching objective of the program was to bring Kazakhstan closer to international practices in education. This concerned the structure of education (such as introducing 12-year pre-tertiary education and a three-tier

[45] By the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan of July 5, 2001 No. 648 "On the granting of special status to individual state higher Educational institutions", as national universities were designated: *1. Kazakh National University. Al-Farabi. 2. Eurasian National University. L.N. Gumilev. 3. Kazakh National Agrarian University. 4. Kazakh National Technical University. K.I. Satpayev. 5. Kazakh National Medical University. S.D. Asfendiyarov. 6. Kazakh National Pedagogical University Abay. 7. Kazakh National Academy of Arts. T.K. Zhurgenova. 8. Kazakh National Conservatory. Kurmangazy. 9. Kazakh National Academy of Music.*

structure of higher education), governance of higher education (introduction of cooperative governance and the expansion of autonomy for HEIs, the integration of external stakeholders into the governance of HEIs, and an overhaul of external and internal quality assurance), the participation in international studies such as PISA, TIMSS, CIVIC, SITES, LES and the participation in international networks of quality assurance agencies such as ENQA, and INQAAHE. In 2002/2003, the classificator of specializations was changed and for the first time included BA and MA programs. In 2005 the first two universities began preparing PhDs. In 2007, 5-6 more HEIs joined them, and in 2008 the former *aspirantura* and *doktorantura* were discontinued in favor of PhD degrees. The last defenses of the old degrees took place in 2010 (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017). According to one of the co-authors, the SPED *"...promoted HEI to international standards, and in particular to European ones. […] It created a powerful impetus and created the preconditions for the realization of the action lines of the Bologna Process. […] But participation in the Bologna Process was not our goal in and by itself. It was important to do this so that we would be noticed and understood in Europe and the world."* (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)

As part of these efforts, a review of Kazakhstan's education system was commissioned from the World Bank and OECD (2007). The report made a strong case for reforming the system of higher education, underscored the importance of investing in quality, decentralizing the rigid system of bureaucratic governance, encouraged expanding institutional autonomy, encouraging competitive funding procedures, more autonomy as well as accountability in their use of funding, more entrepreneurial leadership and discussed the implications of adopting the Bologna framework (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016). Once of the key authors of the SPED2005-2010 summarizes its guiding thinking as follows:

> *"When Kazakhstan became a market economy, we also became a part of the wider world. When, before we lived in a closed country, after the borders opened it became clear that there are such specializations like marketologists, managers, which we did not train. During Soviet times we trained "specialists". There was no sense to train specialists for narrow fields any more. We tried on one hand, to improve the quality of training, and on the other we tried to integrate the experience of countries with a market economy to Kazakhstan and to orientate ourselves on these standards, to integrate ourselves" (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)*

The SPED plays a significant role in the policy formulation process in Kazakhstan, in that it informs the yearly strategic work plans of the MoES which, in turn, tries to align the strategic development plans of HEIs and their rectors to the national priorities. As an experienced and high-ranking official from the MoES pointed out:

> *"Everything should be in one architecture. First one [strategy], then everything in accordance. We came from a [central] planning state, which is why we need to plan. However, much they talked about how the market regulates, this is still not at all like that. And in higher education it should [not] be like that. Because it is very important to plan correctly, because the result will*

be visible only in decades. If we now do something not right somewhere, nothing terrible will happen now. [But] it will show in 10, 20 years" (Interview KZ No. 5, 2016)

7.2.3.1 National system of quality assurance, accreditation, and rankings emerge

The SPED 2005-2010 included for the first time a sub-section on the quality of education (Kalanova, S. & Omirbayev, 2009) in which for the quality assurance framework of the educational system was for the first time described in its entirety, creating a "*National System of quality assessment in education*" which structured the existing instruments of quality assurance (licensing, state attestation, the UNT and intermediate state control) and added the accreditation, internal quality management and self-assessment of HEIs (Kalanova, S. & Omirbayev, 2009).

The SPED 2005-2010 made explicit reference to the goal to create the conditions for Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna Process. The introduction of quality management systems in HEIs, institutional and specialized accreditation by leading foreign accreditation agencies were mentioned as helping to "*implement the key principles of the Bologna declaration and the WTO"*[46]. Especially the introduction of accreditation can be clearly related to the Bologna Process, as one of the authors of the SPED explained:

"It was very important that we should be in the Bologna Process and studied all its principles, because as long as the system of internal quality management don't fully work, our HEIs will not be fully competitive on the European higher education market." (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)

Voluntary state accreditation begins

HEIs were expected to conduct **internal evaluation** in the form of self-assessments (self-certifications), quality management, ongoing performance monitoring, and the evaluation of educational achievements of students.

The ***National Accreditation Center*** *(Natsional'niy akkreditsionniy tsentr - NAC)* was to be responsible for institutional and specialized accreditation, developing a consistent accreditation criteria and procedures for evaluating the quality of harmonization with the terms of the Bologna process, performs the procedure of recognition and nostrification of education documents issued by foreign educational organizations, participates in international programs on quality assurance. It was established by the MoES and was charged with developing a new methodology for accreditation. At the time of the foundation of the NAC, the law on education did not formulate a basis for accreditation, therefore NAC began to develop their own standards based on American standards and the ESG and began to offer seminars on accreditation to HEIs.

[46] It is not fully clear, however, why the WTO is referenced here.

In 2007, when the Law of education and the law on Licensing were revised, it did provide a framework for accreditation which specified that institutional accreditation should be a) a voluntary procedure, and b) that accreditation should be conducted according to the standards of the accreditation agency carrying it out. This allowed NAC to instantly start working on the basis of the ESG without waiting for the government to develop their own set of standards and created an important precondition for the independence of Quality Assurance agencies in Kazakhstan.

National rankings emerge

At the time, however, there were few to no incentives for HEIs to undergo accreditation. This led the then president of NAC to develop Kazakhstan's first university rankings in 2006 and 2007, which quickly became to be used by the government as a justification for certain decisions. As the former head of the NAC recounts:

> *"Well, since I did not have any tools to influence HEIs I launched the [university] ranking. […] At the time, no such ranking existed [in Kazakhstan]. You see, we needed to do something to influence HEIs. […] When the ranking launched HEIs instantly became interested […] Then a friend of mine from the [presidential] administration calls me and says "I showed your booklet [with the ranking results] to the president and on the basis, that it takes last place we need to close down some state HEI. They took the ranking and closed that HEI on this basis. And when they had to get rid of some rector, they also used the ranking"* (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017).

Over the years, the ranking became increasingly popular with school leavers who regularly consult it as one source of information when choosing a university[47]. Since the ranking was not an activity of the MoES, but the intellectual property of the former director of NAC, when she founded the *Independent Quality Assurance Agency* (IQAA) in 2008, the ranking was published by IQAA.

Systematic collection of educational data begins

Another goal of the SPED 2005-2010 was to improve the statistical data basis on education through the creation of a national system of quality assessment and monitoring system. ***The National Center for Educational Quality Assessment*** *(Natsional'niy tsentr otsenki kachestva obrazovaniya - NCEQA)* was founded to fulfil this task. This monitoring system created a statistical database from data from different sources, including the results of HEI rankings, and feed into a yearly national report on the state of education. The system was to provide information on the effectiveness of the education system, help strategy development and planning and increase the responsibility of local executive bodies. NCEQA prepared an annual national report about the state of education in the Republic of Kazakhstan. NCEQA later became part of the Information-Analytical Center (IAC). The major changes in the QA architecture

[47] The high attention that students and the government paid to the ranking results led the a change in methodology where the ranking positions of HEIs with the weakest results are not made explicit.

with its array of new institutions and accountability measure did not work smoothly at first. As Raza (2009) pointed out:

> *"the accountability mechanisms that have been put in place as part of the reform process are excessive. In an attempt to radically reform the sector, the government of Kazakhstan has undertaken too many changes, especially in the area of quality improvement. In the area of quality assurance, numerous bodies exist and often their tasks overlap with each other." (Raza, 2009, p. 30)*

Raza (2009) also points out that the new structure had greater additional supervision and control of HEIs, but had not expanded HEIs autonomy.

7.2.3.2 Restrictions on branch campuses, distance education and access to HE (2005-2010)

Restriction on branch campuses (2004/2007)

By the early 2000ies, private as well as state HEIs were arguably offering low-quality higher education in various ways. The most common of these were study programs at branch campuses, via distance education, and programs catering to alumni of professional colleges. During the 2000ies, these activities were successively clamped down upon. As a former minister of education remembers:

> *"The most pressing problem when I entered office was that we did not control the opening of branch campuses. Any university or institute could open their branches in any city in Kazakhstan. We applied hard demands to the main university but not to its branches. That is why they could open branches with [just] 100m², and in effect, they started selling diplomas through these branches, people were buying diplomas. There was no regulation going on whatsoever. So, we needed to do something about that, and in short time, in order to close these branches, I initiated a change to the law of education". […] There was very strong resistance against this because it was a really good channel to make money, but I closed this channel" (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)*

In July 2004, the Law 'On introducing amendments and changes to the Law on Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan' was adopted, which tightened the material and technical prerequisites for operating (private) HEIs and affiliated branches and introduced further requirements concerning teaching staff. From the moment the new law entered into force, students could study only the first two years in these branches and the third and fourth year, they had to study at the main HEI. Branches did not have the right to issue diplomas any more.

This was later restricted even more in the 2007 law "*On Education"*, when HEIs were forbidden to offering any study programs education programs in their branches ("filialy") in other cities. This Law also again significantly tightened the licensing requirements for HEIs. It introduced requirements for full-time academic staff, raised the requirements for the material and technical base of HEIs, such as the

availability of owned classroom and laboratory space.

Reducing distance education (2006)

As the number of branch campuses had risen, so had the number of students enrolled in part-time and distance-education programs (*"zaochnoe obrazovanie"*), which were often seen as being of low quality. In 2006, the government introduced restrictions on the enrollment of distance education by establishing that the ratio of students enrolled in distance education to students enrolled in full-time courses could now not exceed 1:4.

Restricting access to professional college graduates (2010)

Even though access to higher education for school graduates was only possible through taking the UNT, for graduates of professional colleges, taking the centralized test was optional and only required for those prospective students wanting to apply for state educational grants. Graduates of professional colleges, who were willing to pay out-of-pocket, could still apply directly to HEIs and be accepted based on an HEI's own admittance exams.

As a senior ministry official described, this led to a deterioration of standards:

> *"This was the ministry's policy because there were too many college graduates which had left schools after 9th grade, studied at a college and then entered HE without a [centralized] exam, mostly to poor private HEIs. And this is why the enrollment of private HEIs at that time almost equaled the enrollment of state HEIs. […] HEIs looked at them as a source of income, […] which is why, especially private HEIs did not care what level the student had. They just took in all and that is why especially private HEIs during that time, just became diploma factories [mills]. Not only private HEIs, but also state HEIs in the regions did this." (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)*

In 2010, compulsory centralized "complex testing" (CT) became compulsory also for graduates of professional colleges. This change significantly reduced access to HEI by these graduates who often did not pass the complex test (CT).

As a result of these restrictions, as well as of several attempts to conduct an "optimization process" of the number of HEIs by encouraging them to merge, the number of HEIs dropped from 182 in 2004/2005 to 139 in 2012/2013.

7.2.3.3 Introduction of corporate governance – boards and strategic management

In 2007, the MoES issued an order calling for the establishment of advisory boards (*popechitel'skie sovety*) for all HEIs. These boards were to support the HEI leadership with advancing international cooperation, improve study conditions, support vulnerable students, and make suggestions to "eliminate

shortcoming" of unspecified nature (OECD, 2017). These boards were thus advisory in nature and primarily tasked with providing guidance to senior administration, especially the rector, and they played a role in external relations and fundraising (Hartley, Eckel et al., 2016). The boards were not, however, given any formal role in the governance of the HEI. They did not have the oversight powers, could not hire or fire the rector, had no say over the budget and could not hold institutions accountable for their performance. Even through private HEIs were not by law required to have advisory boards, many followed suit and established their own boards (Interview KZ No. 20, 2017). Between 2007 and 2015, 62 of 125 established such boards (OECD, 2017).

Since 2007, HEIs were also required by law to have strategic plans and to develop corresponding development plans (*plany razvitiya*), which link key indicators on educational activity with corresponding financial indicators. HEIs needed to present their results each year to the Ministry of Finance and justify the expended finances with the results reached. An attempt to introduce results-based budgeting for the was made in 2008 education system (and the health system), but ultimately aborted since it proved impossible to link financial inputs to educational outcomes or the quality of education (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017).

7.2.3.4 Institutional Differentiation in Elite Universities – Nazarbayev University is founded (2009)

In 2006, the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev had first announced the idea of creating a world class university during his annual address to the nation. This university was founded as a Joint-Stock Company under the name of "New University of Astana". Construction had begun in 2007 and in 2009, a new team was appointed, which was supported with advice by the World Bank which organized field trips and presentations of different university models (Interview KZ No. 3, 2017). The vision of the university and its stated purpose was to act as a model of a world-class university for Kazakhstan's universities, promote international level research and contribute to the development of Astana as a hub of international innovation (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016).

From its founding, Nazarbayev University was exempted from all oversight by the MoES and instead was governed by a board of trustees, a rector and senior administrative staff, and an academic council. NU operated under its own law, independent of oversight and control by the MoES, which grants it autonomy far beyond what other public HEIs enjoy. Among other areas, the board and leadership of Nazarbayev University may approve its own internal budget, set tuition fees, determine hiring policies for faculty and administration, determine admissions requirements, and open new programs. Each academic unit has an international partner that is supposed to aid them in their development. The government created very favorable financial conditions to attract international faculty, established an endowment fund for future financial independence and – since its start until the writing of this chapter in 2017 - covered the tuition of all students who were admitted.

In 2014, the MoES introduced the idea of "special status" elite universities under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice. "Special status" universities were to be defined as universities that have made a significant contribution to the development of Kazakhstan since independence and are competitive by international standards. Universities that are given this status were to receive more autonomy from the MoES and should be able to respond accordingly to market and stakeholder demands in areas like program offerings, course curricula, and student workload. Until 2016, however, only Nazarbayev University has been given this special status.

Al-Farabi University had always been designated National Research University which had enjoyed curricular autonomy. In late 2014, the second university acquired the status of a National Research University when Satbayev Kazakh National Technical University was converted into a non-profit, joint-stock company with a 100% government share (Alpysbayeva & Akhmetzhanova, 2016).

7.2.4 Differentiation and expanding autonomy (2011-2017)

Thanks to the changes in study structures and quality assurance reforms of the SPED2005-2010, on March 12, 2010, Kazakhstan became the first Central Asian Republic to sign the Lisbon Convention and become the forty-seventh member of the Bologna Process (BP).

The State Program of Education Development 2011-2020

In 2010, a new reform vision was articulated in the "*State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020*" (SPED 2011-2020) (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan[MoES], 2010). In 2006, the government of Kazakhstan had invited experts from the OECD and the World Bank to conduct a review of its higher education system (World Bank & OECD, 2007). The results of this study markedly informed subsequent reforms (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016) as is evident in the SPED 2011-2020's identification of the most pressing challenges: "*infrastructure development, academic corruption, a mismatch between academic programs and the labor market's needs, a gap between teaching, research and industry, a need for more effective university leadership, harmonizing the academic system with the Bologna, democratization of education and the lack of legislative framework for universities seeking greater autonomy*" (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan[MoES], 2010).

Concerning the governance of the higher education system, the SPED 2011-2020 formulated the following objectives and activities:

- align the higher education system with the Bologna Process regulations by 2015
- establishing an independent QA system, and have universities undergo independent national institutional and program accreditation
- improvement of education management including implementation of corporate governance principles (through implementing boards of trustee, expanding public-private partnerships; and qualification training for heads of HEI);

- improvement of the system of monitoring education development, that includes establishment of national education statistics with consideration of international requirements;
- Implementation of an internationally recognized National Qualification System with participation of employers' associations who were to develop professional standards corresponding to the National Qualification System.
- expanding university autonomy and strengthening university governance
- The SPED laid out a new system of classification of HEIs depending on the study programs they offered and the scope of scientific-research activity they carried out. HEIs would be differentiated into national research universities, national higher educational institutions, research universities, universities, academies and institutes. This process was begun in 2015, when the status of national research universities was legally established in the law on education.

The SPED2011-2020 laid out most of the policy changes which were implemented between 2011 and 2017.

"100 concrete Steps" – Plan of the Nation

In 2014, continuously low oil prices, the parallel economic downturn within the Russian Federation starting in 2014 (driven itself by low commodity prices, and Western sanctions due to the annexation of Crimea) led to the decision to uncouple the Tenge from the US-Dollar and let the exchange rate float. This led to further currency devaluations in 2014 and 2015. On 20 May 2015, soon after President Nursultan Nazarbayev's re-election, the president announced the "100 Concrete Steps" program, titled "*Plan of the Nation*", which was seen as a direct reaction to worsening regional and global conditions. The plan was a highly ambitious, comprehensive reform package with measures to contribute to five institutional reforms: *1. Creation of a modem and professional civil service (measures* open recruitment including from the private sector and from abroad, better training, and pay and promotion linked to performance will be introduced*); 2. ensuring the rule of law (*English system of law*, improving qualifications and standards for judges and police); 3. industrialization and economic growth (*improving protection for investors, cutting red tape, making tax more transparent and supporting entrepreneurship*); 4. "a unified nation for the future"; and 5. transparency and accountability of the state.* A Commission on National Modernization was set up under the President of Kazakhstan to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the program. The CEO of Sberbank and author of Russia's economic reforms of the early 2000ies, German Gref was quoted to have experienced a "culture shock" at the depth and scope of Kazakhstan's reform agenda (Idrissov, 2015).

The program included several provisions with impact on higher education to HE governance. Regarding the general reforms of public administration relevant to higher education, it reinforced the call for reduced and more standardized procedures of monitoring, assessment and control focused on results, and abolishing procedural and interim oversight. State agencies' efficiency were to be audited annually, with audits replacing operational control. Heads of state agencies were to publish annual reports on achieving

key objectives on official websites. Likewise, all central state agencies were to facilitate online access to statistical data, including reports on budgets, spending, and reports on external evaluations. Lastly, the participation of citizens, the private sector and self-regulated organizations in governance was to be promoted. The program reaffirmed the goal of university autonomy, phrased as "moving gradually towards the self-management of universities", considering the experience of the Nazarbayev University. Private universities were to be transformed into non-profit organizations.

Since 2016, the expansion of university autonomy, of the rights of university boards, and the easing of qualification and licensing requirements correspond to these priorities. In the 2000s there used to be 216 individual qualification requirements, such as square meters of lecture halls per student or the required number of books in libraries can be seen. Since 2015, their number started to shrink and more areas to be less strictly regulated (Interview KZ No. 20, 2017).

7.2.4.1 System of independent Accreditation emerges

In 2005, the government had established the National Accreditation Centre (NAC) within the MoES as an accreditation agency as well as the competent authority to recognize accreditation agencies (OECD, 2017). In 2007, the law of education had first made mention of voluntary accreditation but had not yet attached any legal consequences to HEIs or study programs who had successfully passed it. Neither had accreditation replaced mandatory state attestation.

There had been a lot of criticism of the attestion process among HEI representatives for being both too inflexible and oriented at quantitative indicators as well as for being conducted in the spirit of distrust and control, as well as of insufficient training of reviewers.

Even though attestation was formally paid for by the state, it still incurred costs for HEIs.

> *"You see, in reality, attestation turned out more expensive for HEIs [than accreditation]. They spent it to take the commissions somewhere. Somewhere money was given, others were appeased [in other ways]. In fact, they spent more money than on accreditation, but that is not even the most importantly thing. They were not even sure whether they would pass [because the criteria were intransparent]"* (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017)

The process was criticized for being too much dependent on the review committee and their individual members' preferences and ideas, for the poor quality of and for the site-visits being excessively long[48] (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). As one rector describes her experiences with attestation:

> *"The people who came to control are also teachers [professors] from other HEIs. And they somehow believe that how they are doing things at their own HEI is the right way and how we are doing them is not right. I always said "explain to me why this is not correct? Show me why*

[48] The site-visit of an attestation committee could take up to 10 days

this should not be correct?". This was a very, very difficult process." (Interview KZ No. 11, 2017)

Especially within the MoES and the CCES, which was responsible for attestation, however, there was a high degree of skepticism and reluctance to let go of state control in attestation or in accreditation. As a former high-ranking official from the MoES recounts:

> *"Formally, accreditation was non-governmental, but in fact it remained in the hands of the government as NAC was a subordinated body to the MoES. We just did half a step forward and said the MoES would not conduct accreditation, that would be done by NAC according to independent principles. That the MoES would not intervene. But in actual fact, of course, the ministry got involved" (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)*

Between 2008-2017, however, the system of quality assurance was gradually shifted from state attestation towards accreditation by independent quality assurance agencies. The SPED2011-2020 was instrumental in this shift which fundamentally changed the quality assurance system of Kazakhstan. Several factors can be identified which promoted the shift from state attestation and accreditation to independent accreditation:

In March 2010, Kazakhstan had signed the Bologna Declaration. One of the action lines of the BP was quality assurance through accreditation with the *European standards and guidelines (ESG)* with their basic understanding that external quality assurance should be independent. The absence of independence had been criticized in several external reviews (Raza, 2009; World Bank & OECD, 2007). As a former senior official from the MoES describes the influence of the Bologna Process on accreditation:

> *"As a country which joined the Bologna Process and took upon itself the responsibility to correspond to these criteria, we started to reform our system of quality assurance in accordance with these requirements. As you have seen, as the system changed from government accreditation to independent accreditation which corresponds to European standards. If we had not been in the Bologna Process, of course we would have said, "oh no, we will do it our way"." (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)*

Furthermore, the system was often been criticized for *"introducing new private sector players without offering the necessarily levels of autonomy, while overloading institutions with accountability measures"* (Raza, 2009). During the preparation of the SPED, the President himself held several meetings where he urged all ministries to reduce the amount of oversight-related controls and the number of inspections in their areas (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017), thus stressing the importance of less state supervision and greater autonomy. This gave a strong impetus especially to the development of independent accreditation in Kazakhstan:

> *"He [the president] [said] that we have too many inspectors, too many inspections, and it's necessary to stop this, and to reduce, because these checks do not permit businesses to work.*

They do not allow, as they said, Kazakhstan to move forward. And therefore, every ministry needed to cut the number of controls. And since at that time the process related to introducing accreditation was ongoing […] the ministry [MoES] was really to let go of state attestation, and to conduct accreditation, in order that there would be some sort of verification from the side of the ministry. The fact that the president made this point so strongly […] made this possible." (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017)

The business community which participated in the development of the SPED2011-2020 supported the shift from state control to accreditation. As the former general secretary of Atameken remembers, the independence of HEIs and its perceived international prestige were significant motivations for the introduction of accreditation:

"We were attracted to independence then. [… Out policy was to the reduction of the control and supervisory functions of state organs. When we looked at all of their control and oversight functions, we realized that you can reduce these things and transfer them to the market – to independent accreditation. […] Moreover, we, too, [analyzed] the international level, we saw how it was developing in other countries. It is time that we also introduced this institution, [since] the most advanced [Kazakh] universities already went to Europe looking for agencies to accredit them. This was, in the first place, about prestige, although they did not gain anything [any tangible benefits] from it. It was neither connected to financing, nor to the kind of diploma, as it now is. It was a matter of prestige. They wanted to keep pace with these European universities." (Interview KZ No. 19, 2017)

General doubts about the MoES's ability to objectively conduct accreditation and the hope that participation in a regional QA structure would lead to greater recognition of Kazakh degrees in Europe were additional motivations:

"On one hand, this way world practice. In the old version of the law, there was only state accreditation. It was very important for us that the private sector recognized our diplomas. On the other hand, in our country there was no accreditation organ, this function was implemented by the ministry. The ministry cannot do this work qualitatively. There are public servants there. This is why there cannot be quality. For different reasons: Public servants come, and they can really easily be bought. Today, he is on this job, tomorrow on another. There is no history, etc. On the other hand, we wanted to accomplish that our diplomas would not only be recognized in Kazakhstan, but also in other countries. If there would be only state accreditation, with this accreditation getting recognized in European countries would be very difficult. In Europe, there are institutes of independent accreditation. If we become part of this regional organ of accreditation, if they recognize the work of our independent organ of quality assurance, as a consequence, they can recognize the diplomas of HEIs accredited in Kazakhstan, that what we wanted to reach." (Interview KZ No. 18, 2017)

The goal of independent accreditation replacing state attestation was formulated in the SPED2011-2020 and foresaw that by 2012, accreditation should be carried out by noncommercial, nongovernment accrediting agencies, which would be listed members in a register of recognized accreditation bodies. By 2015, state attestation should cease completely and be replaced by independent accreditation. By 2020 65% of Kazakhstani HEIs were to have passed independent National Institutional as well as program accreditation in accordance with international standards (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan[MoES], 2010). Furthermore, by 2020 all Kazakh QAAs should be included in EQAR. In the earlier drafts of the SPED2011-2020, it was foreseen that accreditation should be exclusively conducted by international agencies. This was later changed to include (future) national QAAs, which would operate according to international standards (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017).

Implementation

First experiments with international accreditation had been supported between 2008-2011 through a publicly funded program called "Quality assurance in education", which had provided funding for the accreditation of ten study programs at five national universities (Dondi, 2014). Likewise, in 2008, the first *Independent Kazakhstan Quality Assurance Agency for Education (IQAA)* had been founded to conduct accreditation on the ESG principles that the quality assurance of HEIs should be conducted by independent organizations outside of the direct control and without operational interference by the government. The founder and president of IQAA, Sholpan Kalanova, had been a Vice-rector of two public universities, Deputy Director of the *Department of State Inspection and Monitoring*, Deputy Director of the Administrative *Department of the Ministry of Education and Science*, Director of the *National Accreditation Centre* of the MoES. She left the National Accreditation Centre (NAC) in 2008 and founded IQAA. For the period between 2008 and 2012, both IQAA and NAC conducted accreditations in Kazakhstan. Interest in independent accreditation during the first years was rather low, however:

> *"[NAC], of course, spread fast because the minister gave the order that everybody should be accredited through the ministerial agency. This was in 2009, 2010. Only, afterwards this changed, when I joined the presidential administration. Because [our] status was different. You see […], they began to have a different attitude, including the minister himself. You see, how life changes" (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017)*

Accreditation became fully independent in 2011, when the *National Accreditation Centre* (NAC) was reorganized into the "*Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center*", the *National Register of Accreditation Bodies* and the *National Registers of Accredited Institutions and Accredited Study Programs, which* were established within the MoES, as well as rules and procedures for inclusion into the register. Modelled after the US-model and the European register of quality assurance agencies (EQAR), HEIs may any other registered national or international QAA to undergo a state-recognized accreditation review (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). The MoES Order on the National Register of Accreditation Bodies included a number of stipulations to safeguard the operational independence of QAAs. No registered

agency may be affiliated with any HEI, their seat cannot be located on the premises of any HEI and reviews must be conducted on their own terms and conditions (ENQA, 2017).

The *Bologna Process and Mobility Center* became the central coordinating and training authority on all issues related to the Bologna- and mobility-related reforms and processes, such as recognition of diplomas and degrees. Part of the staff of the NAC founded the *Independent Agency for Accreditation Rating (IAAR)* as the second non-governmental quality assurance agency after IQAA. It continued to use the accreditation methodology and standards of NAC.

The 2011 law on education also included clear incentives for HEIs to undergo independent accreditation: HEIs that passed institutional and program accreditation in recognized accreditation agencies would be exempt from state attestation for the period of accreditation, but not more than 5 years (Article 59, item 4). They would be allowed to issue their own diplomas. Lastly, and most significantly, only accredited HEIs would be allowed to enroll state-funded students. This represents a powerful incentive for most universities to seek accreditation (Sagintayeva, A. et al., 2014).

The announcement that accreditation would become a prerequisite to enroll state-funded students caused uncertainty among universities. Several HEIs sought out international accreditation. As one former vice-rector remembers:

> *"Because of this, we applied for accreditation for those study programs, which are the most important ones for us. And we paid a lot of money. […] For us as a university, this was a very serious amount. But due to the fact that we were afraid that the next year we would not receive any grants for our main study programs, it was the decision of the leadership that we will go for it, even if they would give us only some kind of temporary accreditation. In any case, we needed international accreditation. […] Although we actually underwent accreditation as well as attestation, just in case, as we always do in Kazakhstan, so that we would have everything. (Interview KZ No. 13, 2017)*

With the 2011 revision of the law of education, for the first time since independence, the MoES did in fact transfer powers to other bodies not under its direct control. It went even further than most EU-countries, as it allows all kinds of accreditations being conducted by recognized international agencies. As one representative of a quality assurance agency comments:

> *"Kazakhstan in this respect is at the forefront of the entire planet, even among European countries you hardly find a country which has completely opened its market for international agencies. You see, in 2011 when we conducted the reforms, we implemented the Bologna Process […] There were recommendations that there should be an independent agency and the system should open and our government opened the system so that it would be competitive, that there should be competition on this market. Maybe we approached the [Bologna] ministerial recom-*

mendation a bit overeagerly, but on the other hand, it is good, even for national agencies, because for us this is an incentive to develop because we have strong international competition" (Interview KZ No. 14, 2017)

The difference between attestation and accreditation was stressed by all interviewed stakeholders. The general perception was summarized by one experienced academic reviewer as follows:

"Attestation and accreditation really check different things. That is, I gained the impression that accreditation looks at the general atmosphere of higher education institutions That is because, we interview students, teaching staff and so on. […] Despite all the tricky questions [we ask], we most of all perceive the spirit, the mood, that's how this is. If we had been an attestation commission, we would have enclosed ourselves in an office, have asked for all the curricula, and all the minutes of all committee meetings, all of the teaching load, the calculation of load, the calculation of hours, well, that is, on what subject, how much, what kind of teacher, did how much work. And we would have checked it all and then we would have found mistakes and punished everyone. Accreditation is different .... they gave recommendations!" (Interview KZ No. 13, 2017)

7.2.4.2 Conflict about abolition of state attestation and move to independent accreditation

According to the SPED2011-2020, in 2015, independent accreditation should completely replace state attestion. When 2015 came, all the preconditions were in place. The then-minister of Education and Science, Aslan Sarinzhipov, and the head of the Committee on Control were against the move from attestation to accreditation., however. As a representative of a quality assurance agency remembers:

"I explained to him [Sarinzhipov] what accreditation is, […] how much it costs, and how many universities were accredited. And he immediately sat down at the calculator and began to count. And I told him "you know, firstly, we did not accredit it for one year, that is, divide it into 4 years, and secondly, you consider only incomes, and you do not consider expenses. […] Then, after the meeting, the Chairman of the Committee on Control invited us to his office [..] and said, "I'll destroy your business." I said "you know, this is not my business. This is my work". (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017)

When in 2015, the law on education was due to be revised, the MoES submitted a draft according to which state attestation was to remain in place while accreditation would not be tied to financing in any way. The MoES argued that HEIs and the higher education system as a whole were not ready for this degree of trust and autonomy and that accreditation would be too expensive for HEIs. HEIs, however, strongly opposed this view and argued that in the fact of the matter, attestation, even though nominally financed by the state, was even more expensive than accreditation.

The Ak-Zhol opposition party and its chairman, Azat Peruashev, president of the national chamber of entrepreneurs, took up the issue in favor of accreditation. As a Ak-Zhol official recounts:

> *"In fact, they had a very weak argument. They just said that it is public money, it's expensive for universities. Even though the universities themselves came [to seek out accreditation!]. It also affects student mobility. They [foreign universities] asked the students whether their university was independently accredited!" (Interview KZ No. 19, 2017)*

The MoES, however, was set on their priorities and proceeded to go forward with the bill, using the Nur Otan party's comfortable majority in parliament. As an opposition party-official remembers:

> *"In the parliamentary working groups, there was of course nothing we could do. And when the bill was brought under discussion, our chairman gave a very tough speech. He emphasized the fact that they were changing the state program, the main document. If they changed that, then they should recognize that they failed to implement it properly.*
>
> *They had decided on the changes already in 2008 and it was already 2015, so much time [had passed] and they still claimed that the system was not ready. So, what had they been doing [during all this time]? […] He told them in this way: "Admit that you did not fulfill it [the SPED2011-2020], and that is why you want to change it. Of course, they did not agree to this. […] We began to accuse the Ministry of Education and the Ministry, in turn, of course, not completely honestly began to accuse us that we were lobbying for the interests of the [quality assurance] agencies. […] After this dispute, a huge fight began. Our chairman and the minister were on the front pages of the newspapers." (Interview KZ No. 19, 2017)*

During this conflict, Minister of Education and Science Sarinzhipov accused the leader of the Ak Zhol opposition party, Azat Peruashev, of lobbying for private universities for which the latter, in turn, applied to the general prosecutors' office with a public request to assess Sarinzhipov's words for slander. Eventually, the MoES was forced to concede to the implementation of the SPED and to discontinue state attestation.

When the final bill was put up to the vote, however, only accreditation by international QAAs was mentioned. After further lengthy discussions about the importance of having domestic agencies, of keeping public money within the county and that accreditation by domestic agencies was much cheaper. Finally, a compromise was reached and agencies registered in EQAR would be eligible and that the end of attestation would be postponed to 2017. Since January 2017, state attestation was discontinued and most of Kazakhstan's HEIs began seeking accreditation. By mid-2016, a total of 95 (i.e. 74%) of all 128 HEIs and 2 632 (i.e. 55%) of all 4 800 programs licensed by the MoES had been accredited in Kazakhstan (ENQA, 2017).

7.2.4.3 Expansion of institutional autonomy

Next to independent accreditation, institutional autonomy occupied a prominent place in the SPED 2011-2020. Like accreditation, this most likely had several reasons. The OECD and World Bank review of Kazakhstan's higher education system (World Bank & OECD, 2007) had strongly stressed the issue of institutional autonomy. The Bologna Process also included several references to university autonomy which Kazakhstan had eagerly adopted on a policy level. Before Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Process, Members of the MoES reached out to the Magna Charta Observatory in Bologna and several universities signed the university rectors signed the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, which underlines HEIs' independence and autonomy, the freedom of faculty in teaching and research, and of students to an effective education' (Bricall & Roversi-Monaco, 2002). The process of joining the Bologna Process had then brought to light the tensions between the idea of university autonomy and independent quality assurance in the one hand, which were an inherent part of the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance (ESG), and the reality of Kazakhstan's centralist model of HEI governance on the other.

Clearly, the discourses around the Bologna Process, the European University Association (EUA), the World Bank and the OECD framed university autonomy "as a precondition of competitiveness" (Nokkala, 2012). Policy documents and Kazakh media coverage have portrayed greater university autonomy as a case of global best practice (Sagintayeva, A. & Kurakbayev, 2015). This view was underlined by one senior advisor to the MoES:

> *"Simple analysis shows that the best education systems are those that are autonomous, where universities are autonomous. This is a simple conclusion. Just look at rankings. […] Our universities do not understand this. They are afraid that when the autonomy comes, they will not be given money anymore. But in the world, where there is autonomy, there is also good money."* (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).

During the late 2000ies, the MoES was ready to follow the policy advice on decentralization of power in the formulation of the SPED2011-2020. As one former employee of the World Bank noted:

> *"The World Bank at that time, we were kind of the top organization that the government would go to. We participated in the development of program for education development. We provided recommendations for the program and technical and vocational education (during the 2000ies). The World Bank was well-taken by the government. They would seem to listen to the World Bank as one of the authorities" (Interview KZ No. 3, 2017)*

The SPED 2011-2020 included an expansion of university autonomy "*carrying out their educational, scientific, financial, international and other activity, on the model of the Nazarbayev University"* (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan[MoES], 2010). This was to be implemented through several changes:

- HEIs would receive greater curricular autonomy in developing their study programs.
- "National Research Universities" were to obtain more autonomy by 2015, "National Universities" by 2016, and all other HEIs in 2018[49]
- Public HEIs were to change their status from state enterprises to autonomous noncommercial organizations, subordinated to boards of trustees, and with mechanisms to ensure transparency of HEI activity.
- The SPED also stated that the mechanism of appointment of rectors at the state universities would be "improved".

The ideal laid out in the SPED was clearly one of more autonomous HEIs, which are responsible for competing in the academic marketplace for students, faculty, and research grants on the basis of quality and innovation (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016).

Following the SPED 2011-2020 program, the Law on Science (February 2011) and Education (October 2011) were revised. Nazarbayev university received its own Law "On the status of "Nazarbayev University, Nazarbayev Intellectual schools and the Nazarbayev Fund" which allowed it to operate completely independently from the regulations which governed the rest of the HE system. Several changes were implemented to increase university autonomy, as foreseen in the SPED2011-2020.

Public HEIs become "State enterprises"

In 2013, the legal status of public HEIs was changed from State-owned educational institutions (*kazennyye predpriyatiya*) to "state enterprises on the basis of economic management" (*respublikanskoe gosudarstvennoe predpriyatie na prave khozyaistvennogo vedeniya*). This put them on the same basis as other state enterprises and gave them more operational freedom regarding their internal structure and management. HEIs also received more freedom to remunerate their teaching staff. HEIs could now freely set salaries for senior academic staff within the personnel budget approved by the MoES. Likewise, they could set salaries for senior administrative staff, up to a cap set by the MoES (Alpysbayeva & Akhmetzhanova, 2016). They may could and dismiss staff freely, regulated only by the Labor Code. In addition, national universities were given more autonomy in the area of enrollment procedures, of developing their own study programs, apply their own standards in academic affairs and research, and issue their own diplomas (Alpysbayeva & Akhmetzhanova, 2016). Many were, however, slow to use their new freedoms to develop their own KPI or other system (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).

HEIs were now regulated by both the law on education as well as the Law on State Enterprises. This did, however, create new restrictions and changed the incentives for their governance:

[49] Although it was not clearly formulated what form this autonomy would take

"One characteristic is that the head of the organization has personal responsibility of the rector. Under these circumstances, the rector will try to ensure compliance with the law, in order not to get into trouble." (Interview KZ No. 3, 2017)

7.2.4.4 Strengthening lay governance of HEIs: Introduction of Boards of Overseers (*na-blyudatel'nye sovety*)

The SPED 2011-2020 states that by 2020, ninety percent of all public universities would use "corporate governance mechanisms", which primarily referred to the establishment of boards of overseers made up of representatives of the wider society: civic leaders, employers, authorities, business, NGOs, and mass media representatives (Bilyalov, 2016).

Contrary to original expectations, the advisory boards established since 2007 had not evolved to play a substantive role in the governance of HEIs, as power remained concentrated in the hands of the rectors. As one interviewee involved in research on the effects of advisory boards and boards of overseers pointed out:

"The good thing about the boards of trustees was that they could help the institutions to understand what type of curricula the employers wanted. The problem was that they were not involved in governance. They were not involved in any strategic decisions. And still, if you look at the bylaws of some boards of trustees you would see all kind of these suggestive verbs, such as "advise the rector", or "suggest", or "recommend" or "support". There wouldn't be any real power in the boards. Plus it was not a very effective enterprise, because those boards meet once or twice a year, the members did not invest a lot of time into board work and was acting in a supporting role rather than anything else. " (Interview KZ No. 3, 2017)

In 2012, the MoES issued an order calling for the establishment of "boards of overseers" (*na-blyudatel'nye sovety*). In nine universities, such reformed "Boards of Overseers" were established.

The new Boards of Overseers were to be composed of representatives of the MoES, regional executive bodies, the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs, the public[50], and leaders of state-owned enterprises (OECD, 2017). The Boards were to decide on the allocation of scholarships and other funds from non-government sources and accumulated capital. There was also to be more accountability as board members were assured the right to access any documents and data pertaining to the state of the HEI. In statements of intent, the MoES communicated boards of overseers were eventually to have powers comparable to governing boards of western HEIs, including the rights to select the rector of the university; approve budgets; define strategy, admissions criteria, and faculty hiring policies; and even set the senior

[50] It is unclear what constituency is meant, however

leadership team's salaries (Bilyalov, 2016). It was planned that the original Boards of Trustees will be transformed into these new structures (Bilyalov, 2016). The MoES expanded the rights of the boards in small steps.

Election of Rectors through boards of overseers

In early 2015, the MoES established a new procedure for appointing rectors of a public universities, in which the role of boards of overseers was strengthened. The MoES also further specified the procedures and qualification requirements for electing Board Members and, for the first time, guaranteed their role in the Law on State Assets which regulates public universities.

A significant change in the role of overseers was their new role in the election of rectors since 2016. Whereas they used to be appointed directly by the minister (or, in the case of national universities, by the president), a new multi-step selection process involving a public competition procedure was introduced. This process includes the following steps:

When a position of rector becomes vacant or a three-year term nears its end, the MoES announces a public competition to which interested individuals can apply with a strategic development plan for the HEI in question. The candidatures are forwarded to the HEI's board of overseers, which assesses them and conducts interviews with candidates. The board then issues a recommendation of at least two individuals to the "*Republican Commission on the selection of rectors*" operated by the MoES (composed of the Minister, Members of Parliaments, representatives of the President's administration, of the association of HEIs, of unions, of MoES staff, and of the association of entrepreneurs. The Commission assesses the candidates, their qualifications and strategy and makes a judgement on how well the proposed strategy serves the wider strategy for the country's development. On the basis of the recommendation of the Republican Commission the Minister then issues the decree nominating the rector. The Commission can (and sometimes does) also reject all candidates and demand that the competition be repeated. After a three-year term ends, the rector has to account for the results reached during this time and a new competition is announced, in which the rector may (and has to) re-apply.

As a high-ranking MoES employee recounts, the new procedure is well-received by its target audience:

> *"I am a member of the board of trustees of [a regional university]. When the competition was announced, we had 18 candidates for rector. The competition is open. I was very surprised and glad that people already believe [that they can become rector] and apply, from all regions of Kazakhstan."* (Interview KZ No. 10, 2017)

On the one hand, the new procedure does allocate more responsibility and involvement to the boards of overseers and thus of more stakeholders than the old system of direct appointment of rectors by the minister. As a high-ranking MoES employee summarized the changes, *"the good old times, when a rector was appointed by the minister and stayed there forever, are over*" (Interview KZ No. 10, 2017).

On the other hand, the new structure is also a powerful instrument of the State to ensure that HEI's strategies coincide with the central government's priorities.

Reluctance among rectors and staff against boards of overseers

As of 2015, in general, the Boards of Overseers seem to not yet have developed a strong role in decision-making and accountability of the rector (Sagintayeva, A. & Kurakbayev, 2015). A roundtable of rectors organized by the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University on the topic of boards of oversees shows that many HEIs were still struggling re-define the working relationship between rectors and boards (Hartley, Eckel et al., 2016). The resulting white paper identifies legal, capacity-related, and cultural barriers for the expansion of university autonomy and governance and oversight by boards of overseers. A key concern which was voiced by several rectors relates to the balance of autonomy and accountability. Rectors fear that a loosening of ministerial control without sufficiently principled HEI leadership and strong oversight by board and/or other bodies might open the doors to corruption. A second reason is that not all Kazakh HEIs may have sufficient capacity for autonomy, as they are highly diverse in terms of their profiles, geographical location, revenue opportunities, the quality and experience of their boards, and the expertise of their administrative staff to take over functions previously fulfilled by the MoES. A third reason are the incentives set by the legal framework. Even though the role of the boards of overseers is to be strengthened vis-à-vis the MoES, the latter still controls the appointment of rectors and needs to confirm the appointment of vice-rectors. The Law "On State Property", which public HEIs underlie, specifies the rector as having "undivided authority" as well as her individual responsibility for the management and development of the university, as well as for compliance with legislation. HEIs have little flexibility in actively manage their budgets and the rector is personally responsible for the university as public property.

The establishment of boards of overseers with whom strategy and budget need to be coordinated added an additional factor of uncertainty to this relationship, which was at odds with the legal framework. If boards were to gain legal power over budgetary decisions, this would divide authority from responsibility, exposing the rectors to consequences and disincentivizing risk taking and innovation (Hartley, Eckel et al., 2016). Likewise, as the institution of boards of overseers was new, many board members (still) lacked a sufficient understanding of their roles and/or the HEIs they are supposed to oversee. This left rectors with both much greater power, as well as additional responsibility to educate the board members to whom they are accountable. Lastly, the white book notes that not all board members understand the distinction between management and governance and that some board members begin to micro-manage act rather than provide oversight and direction (Hartley, Eckel et al., 2016). While boards in general did not yet play a strong role, one rector was quoted that *"the Akim [mayor, on the board of overseers] decides everything. Supervision has been replaced with the actual management of the university"* (Hartley, Eckel et al., 2016, p. 11). A higher education researcher I interviewed explained the weak role of boards by 2017 as follows:

"The boards of trustees, they have no income and they do not even get any encouragement. It's only the status, and here the question is how much influence they have, when in the law on education it is written that the rector is responsible for everything. He is responsible for everything: for health, for the premises, for fire safety, for the material base, for everything .... And if he is responsible for everything, then this is the responsibility of one person. Of course, he also decides everything because it is his responsibility. Perhaps, another law on education is needed, where this responsibility will be collective and lie with the board of directors" (Interview KZ No. 13, 2017)

The MoES, however, retains a degree of influence also in boards of overseers as no decisions can be taken with the MoES representatives being present. As a senior MoES official and former rector explained:

"You know we cannot make the boards of overseers completely independent. The policy of the ministry should be aimed at implementing the general education policy. That's why each supervisory board has representatives from the ministry. Without the representative of the ministry no decisions may be made. It is not a veto, everybody can be against him and the decision will be taken. But if he was against it in the Ministry they will know about it and will react somehow." (Interview KZ No. 5, 2016)

However, although boards are still finding their role and the relationship between HEIs and MoES is still in the process of readjustment, the changes have led to rectors finding themselves more accountable to a wider stakeholder environment as before. As a senior HEI administrator summarizes:

"Before, the rector's powers were absolute. He was "god and king" [bog I tsar] in the university. Now they [the rectors] begin to understand they have to account to someone. Some are nervous about the situation, but this is already a fact ... In my view this was a very good move. […] The fact that they have to fight to become rector, write a development plan, then defend it before the supervisory board - this is good. Previously, they were simply appointed by the ministry. Now they pass through the supervisory board. It seems to me that this is a revolutionary thing." (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017)

7.2.4.5 Creation of analytical capacity and joining of OECD

Since 2010, the MoES has been pursuing actions to redefine its role in support of a more decentralized, autonomous network of HEIs while at the same time maintaining essential national-level regulatory controls and increasing its system steering capacity. There were indeed several steps taken towards decentralizing governance functions from the MoES to subsidiary bodies, buffer institutions and HEIs, with the stated goal of increasing the autonomy of institutions in their academic, financial, and organizational decision-making (Bilyalov, 2016). These new buffer bodies include the new independent quality assurance agencies and the creation of an independent accreditation system, the *Bologna Process*

and *Academic Mobility Center* for promoting the implementation of the BP, or the *Information-Analytical Center (IAC)*.

Efforts to strengthen the analytical capacity of education in the country and to improve the data basis for effective governance had been called for already in the SPED2005-2010. In 2011, Kazakhstan began the process of joining the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017). This process entails joining the different committees of OECD, including joining the committee on educational policy. The precondition for this was that Kazakhstan conduct a complete review of all levels of education as well as participate in TALIS and PIACC.

In 2012, in order to improve the data basis for education management and to create a central authority for education statistics and a single data base, as well as to administer all OECD-related research, the MoES reformed the *National Centre for Education Quality Assessment* into the *National Centre of Education Statistics and Evaluation* (NCESE) and in 2014 into the *Information-Analytical Center (IAC)* [51] under the MoES. As a senior member of IAC describes, its foundation represents the creation of an instrument for more effective governance of the education system:

> *„There is the project cycle, there is planning, there is implementation, then there is monitoring and evaluation. In this cycle our place is the monitoring and evaluation of reforms which are being implemented in Kazakhstan. […] Five to six years ago, state bodies began to widely implement strategic management, strategic planning, and project management. […] The fact is that without monitoring, without evaluation, our reforms may stall and then fail. Now this is very clearly understood by politics. Therefore, we perform this function (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).*

The IAC has since published an annual report on education statistics, studies on various issues, such as university autonomy in Kazakhstan (Alpysbayeva & Akhmetzhanova, 2016), and coordinates the work of international organizations such as the OECD in the country. In 2015, Kazakhstan and the OECD began a two-year Country Program, to support a set of reforms of Kazakhstan's policies and institutions, covering areas such as public-sector integrity and governance, environment, health, taxation, competition and business climate, and statistics. The program was envisioned to lead to over 20 policy reviews, co-operation in capacity building projects, an increased level of participation in six OECD Committees, and possible adherence to 28 OECD legal instruments, including the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises. As to the motivations for joining OECD and founding IAC, a senior employee stress the value of the international comparison in informing policy:

> *"Of course [it is a matter of] prestige for the country. But more importantly, we have recently been actively engaging in benchmarking in Kazakhstan. You must have noticed. We look at*

[51] IAC was founded as a joint-stock company (*aktsionernoye obshchestvo*) with 100% of stock owned by the government.

foreign experience. So now for us it is very important for us to see how things are done in the best countries, and to do it like this. In order to understand your [our] place. Because for a long time we did not have this opportunity." (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).

Effects of returning students

IAC is a good example of the effect of the Bolashak program and other initiatives of international exchange which Kazakhstan has promoted since the 1990ies. It is notable that the returning graduates are now slowly moving into analytical and leadership positions in the MoES and (to a lesser degree) HEIs. This certainly creates additional capacity in organizations to understand the internal context and apply international practices in Kazakhstan's institutions. As a senior employee of IAC describes:

"At IAC, almost 70% of our staff are young people who studied abroad, at good universities. So, they studied, for example, education. Somewhere around 30% are people who, like me for example, have worked in the system all their life, so they know what Kazakh education is. We hope that this mix will lead to some effect, because on the one hand we have people who know foreign practices and can communicate them there and, on the other hand, there are people who are professionals. This it makes it now possible to study and compare ourselves." (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).

7.2.4.6 Changes to university admission

Based on recommendations from the 2007 OECD/World Bank review of Kazakhstan's higher education system (World Bank & OECD, 2007), the State Program for Education development (SPED) 2011-2020 proposed, that the UNT would be separated into school-leaving and university entry tests from 2015 and to abolish the UNT and Complex Tests. There had always been, however, strong resistance to this recommendation because of fear that such a reform would revert the system to the status ex-ante and expose the process of university admission to corruption (Sagintayeva, A. et al., 2014). Since school graduation exams were conducted separately from the UNT again, uncoupling the functions of university entrance and school leaving exam. As the UNT was not regarded any more as a form of control, but part of the application process to HE, responsibility was passed from the committee of control into the responsibility of the department of higher education within the MoES.

7.2.4.7 Public councils and compulsory inclusion of stakeholders in governance

Starting from January 1, 2016, as a result of "100 steps of the Plan of the Nation", new public councils (*obshestvennye sovety*) were created in Kazakhstan, attached to all government organs. The members of these councils should be representatives of their respective sphere of activity. Under the MoES, the public council on education and science was founded, which is to act as an independent civil organ, chaired not by a ministry representative but by an individual outside of the state structures. The members of this council are representatives of the academic community, professionals, managers from the area of

education, NGOs from the educational sphere. The Council needs to review and discuss all legislation issued by the MoES. The public councils need to be consulted and needs to approve before any normative documents and legislation may be passed, which gives their role a lot of weight.

Without the presence of their commentary (*ekspertnoe soklycheniya*), the ministry of justice does not register any normative documents and legislation issued by the MoES and new laws may thus not enter into force. Likewise, associations such as the association of HEIs and the business association Atameken need to be obligatorily involved in assessing and commenting on all changes to normative documents and legislation on higher education, such as changes of qualification and licensing requirements before they can enter into force.

7.3 The governance model of the Kazakh HE system by 2015

After having re-created tight state control over higher education during the 1990ies through strict state curricular standards, State licensing, attestation and accreditation, centralized testing and centralized state control over admittance into HE, a governance model has emerged in Kazakhstan which is characterized by *marketization* and *state-driven westernization*. More than the other two case countries, Kazakhstan has privatized higher education both through direct state universities in 2001, as well as in funding via its Money-Follows-Students financing model. Since the 2000ies, Kazakhstan has pursued a strategy of involving international, mostly Anglo-Saxon consultants and international organizations such as the OECD but also EU-funded activities in evaluating and advising higher education policy. Under their influence but crucially promoted by the president of the country, the governance system adopted international practices.

These changes include the shift from state attestation to independent and international accreditation in quality assurance (2008/2011/2017). Kazakhstan went further than most EU-countries, as it recognized national reviews as well accreditations conducted by international agencies, as one of the first countries in the EHEA to do so. Stakeholder involvement in governance is being promoted through the introduction of governance boards for stakeholder involvement in HEI-governance (2009/2012), and their involvement in the appointment of rectors. Paradoxically, since involving autonomous stakeholder associations did often not exist, they needed to be created top-down first, before they could be involved in stakeholder governance, as in the case of the business association Atameken, which was founded by presidential order. In terms of institutional governance, state strategy is promoting less direct government control and expanding institutional autonomy. The creation of Nazarbayev University as "Global" Research University with "western" staff and an Anglo-Saxon governance model is an explicit attempt to act as a "role model" and consultants for Kazakhstan's HEIs. In terms of funding the government directly and indirectly prioritizes funding its leading HEIs by higher grant allocations to students at national universities and by incentivizing HEIs to compete for the best students.

While it is clear that the government has been delegating control in a cautious fashion, often keeping final decision-making within its area of competence, the direction of changes point clearly towards the adoption of Anglo-Saxon and EU-models, while the key driving force behind these changes is the Presidential administration as well as internationally-educated cadres, often comprised of alumni of Kazakhstan's Bolashak program.

The following table summarizes aspects of Kazakhstan's model of higher education system governance in 2015:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Changes in the relationship between HEIs and the state</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">State remains highly active in policy-setting but is withdrawing from operational control</td></tr>
<tr><th>Quality Assurance</th><th>Institutional Governance and Autonomy</th><th>Financing higher education</th></tr>
<tr><td>Study programs and their contents are regulated by the educational standard, the state classifier, typical study plans, and qualification and licensing requirements

Compliance with standards is controlled through state licensing, post-licensing controls, and unscheduled controls

Study programs are accredited by independent accreditation agencies

rankings of HEIs operated by QAAs</td><td>Considerable power of HE leadership since Soviet times

Proposal of Rectors by boards of overseers and appointment by government commission

Boards of overseers with power to approve budgets and collaborate in questions of strategy, admissions, hiring, and reimbursement

Power of HEI leadership to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff below vice-rectors considering state qualification requirements</td><td>Line-items prescribed for spending student grants, State funding via money-follows-students scheme.

Competition for students to fill places

Income-diversification and financial autonomy for tuition-fees and other types of income</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Regulation of access to HE</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Centralized testing with UNT and CT

Number of fee-paying students not regulated</td></tr>
</table>

Table 18: Elements of governance model of Kazakhstan's System of Higher Education by 2015

8 The Republic of Moldova

8.1 Introduction

The Republic of Moldova is the South-Westernmost post-Soviet state, situated between Romania and Ukraine, between the area's two main rivers, the Dniester and the Prut. The territory of modern-day Moldova has a long of shifting borders and allegiances, always at the periphery of whatever powerful neighbor happened to control it at the time. The name “Moldova” relates to the Romanian principality of Moldova which existed as an independent entity from 1359 until 1538, when it became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. In 1812, the Russian Empire annexed the eastern part of medieval Moldova from the Ottoman Empire and renamed the annexed territory “Bessarabia”. Bessarabia remained one of the most underdeveloped areas of the Russian empire until World War I, when Romania, having been allied to the victorious Entente Powers, took control of the territory and its majority Romanian-speaking population. It remained part of the Romanian State until the German-Russian non-aggression Pact designated the territory as part of the Soviet sphere of influence, which allowed the Soviet Union to re-annex Bessarabia in June 1940. In August 1940, the Soviet authorities created the Moldovan Soviet Socialist republic (MSSR), based for the most part on the annexed territory of the interwar Bessarabia and an earlier-established Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) which had existed on the eastern bank of the Dniester since 1924 as an autonomous republic of the Ukrainian SSR.

After the Annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR, the Moldavian SSR was formed on August 2, 1940 from the mains parts of Bessarabia and from about 40% of the territory of Moldavian ASSAR which was dismantled. The southern and northern areas of Bessarabia and almost 60 % of the territory of the former MSSAR were incorporated into Ukraine and the new MSSR lost its direct access to the Black Sea. In addition to reconfiguring the demographic landscape of the MSSR in this way, the Soviet government sought to reshape the identity of the republic's remaining population through the creation of a distinct national Moldovan identity. The new Moldovan national identity presupposed a distinctive „Moldovan“ language, different from and separate of the Romanian language, spelled in Cyrillic letters and Russian was imposed as the dominant language at all areas of the public space. This process was not specific to the territory of the Republic of Moldova, but part of the much larger Sovietization that was taking place across the Soviet Union (Worden, 2014, p. 49).

The first democratic elections of the local parliament (February-March 1990) resulted into a strongly western-oriented majority. On 23 June 1990 the new parliament adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty of the MSSR, on 23 May 1991 it officially renamed the MSSR into the Republic of Moldova and on 27 August 1991 it declared the political independence of Moldova and its territorial sovereignty over the former MSSR. On 2 March 1992 the new successor state of the USSR became a member of the United Nations Organizations and gained international recognition as an independent nation.

The Proclamation of Independence of the Republic of Moldova in 1991 marked the beginning of radical political, economic, and social changes aiming at developing a market economy based on private and public property, entrepreneurship, and competition. Much like other CEE nations, it proclaimed political democratization, human rights, civil liberties, and equality of all people regardless of their ethnicity, religious affiliation or race, as guiding principles for its nationhood (Padure, 2009b). Its geographical position at the periphery of Europe and the former Soviet Union, the disappearance of its economic ties and its integration into the Soviet economy and its lack of traditions of as an independent state, and its ethnographic fragmentation represented formidable obstacles. Among the ethnic Moldovans who represented 64 per cent of the population, the creation of an independent Moldovan state coincided with a revival of the ethnic identity as Romanian. The Cyrillic alphabet was replaced by the Latin alphabet, the name 'Romanian' was increasingly used to define the Moldovan language, the Romanian tricolor flag was adopted, and there were a growing number of calls to reunite with Romania.

In opposition to these tendencies, in August 1990 the region on the eastern bank of the Dniester – much of which had been part of the MASSR before the annexation of Bessarabia with its predominantly Russian-speaking population – self-proclaimed an independent "Pridnestrovian Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic" (Transnistria), with its capital in Tiraspol. In 1992, the political conflict degenerated into a military engagement and evolved into a frozen conflict. This also meant that the majority of Moldovan heavy industry and energy production, which had been built on the left bank of the Dniester, was not any more controlled by the government in Chisinau and was not contributing taxes to the budget. The breakup of the USSR meant that the substantial agricultural exports of Moldova lost their markets while imported energy and raw materials became painfully more expensive. The inexperienced bureaucracy was in no way prepared to deal with these gargantuan challenges. The economic collapse happened at a time when public institutions such as a National Bank (established in 1991) and a system of public service were only just being created. The leadership consisted mostly of former Communist party officials while local administrators were either young and inexperienced or trained and socialized in the hierarchical structures of the Soviet Union. In any case, they were not prepared to respond adequately to the cataclysmic changes that were happening in the country (Padure, 2009b).

Political disagreement about the basic direction of the country exacerbated the problems. The political balance frequently shifted between right, center and left political forces, who, when in power, initiated far-reaching changes in many areas. Particularly contagious issues turned out to be language and identity (Romanian versus Moldovan), the role of the state in public and economic life, and the relationship between Moldova and Russia vs. Romania and the EU (Padure, 2009b). The 1994 Constitution established Moldova as a semi-presidential republic in which the president was elected by popular vote. In 2000, the Moldovan Parliament changed the Constitution, and Moldova became a parliamentary republic, with the president being elected by Parliament. As we will see below, these political oscillations led to major fallout in the education sphere as well.

As of the 2004 census, the majority ethnic groups in the areas controlled by the central government in Chisinau identify as Moldovan/Romanian (78 per cent) and Ukrainian (8 per cent), followed by Russian (6 per cent), Gagauz (4 per cent), and Bulgarian (2 per cent) (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2014). According to the 2004 census, Moldova's population was counted to be approx. 3,380,000 in the areas controlled by the central government and 560,000 in the breakaway region of Transnistria. The total population of Moldova in its internationally recognized borders in 2014 was 3,940,000 persons (National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, 2014).

Development of the higher education system during the Soviet Period

Most of the history of higher education on the territory of the current Republic of Moldova is relatively recent and its development only started in scale after the Soviet annexation. While during the interwar period there had been conservatory and two faculties of Romania's University of Iasi in Bessarabia and a pedagogical institute in Tiraspol, after 1940, new HEIs opened in Chisinau, mostly staffed with academics who had been transferred from other Soviet Union republics and Tiraspol (Lisnic, 2011, p. 340). In addition, the training of new teaching staff was conducted mostly in Russian-speaking institutions in Odessa, Kiev, and Moscow (Cojocaru, 1995; Tiron, Arion, Paiu, Scalnîi, & Stan, 2003, p. 23). By 1988 the higher education system of the MSSR included 9 State HEIs (Yagodin, G. A., 1990, p. 76) – one university, seven specialized institutes (tree pedagogical institutes, one medical institute, one technical institute, one agricultural institute, and one institute of art) as well as one conservatory. Participation in HE was, however, lower than in other Soviet republics: In 1988 in the MSSR only 123 persons out of 10,000 were enrolled in higher education, while in the whole USSR this indicator stood at 177 persons per 10,000. Only the Tajik and Turkmen SSR had lower levels of enrollment in higher education.

Excursus: Development of the higher education system after independence in Transnistria

The Transnistrian conflict and the loss of control of the central government over the territory of Transnistria led to a split of the HES of the country in two. In 1990 the Transnistrian regional administration renamed the “T.G.Shevchenko” State Pedagogical Institute into Tiraspol State University and in 1991, the name was changed again into „Tiraspol State Corporative University of the Pridnestrovian region”. 1992 the conflict between Transnistrian and Moldovan authorities had escalated into an armed conflict and the government of the Republic of Moldova evacuated the Tiraspol State University in an organized manner to Chisinau, in a procedure in which almost 2500 students and teaching staff were relocated from Tiraspol. At the same time the staff of “T.G.Shevchenko” Pridnestrovian State Corporative University which had remained in Transnistria established merged what remained of “T.G.Shevchenko” Tiraspol State Pedagogical Institute with the Tiraspol State Corporative University of the Pridnestrovian region. The result was a “breakaway university”, since 1997 renamed into Transnistria State University. This university formed the core of a Transnistria regional HES, which oriented itself at the HES of the Russian Federation. Nowadays this university with around 12.000 students and 110 PhD students follows Russian educational standards and plans and its degrees are recognized within the territory of the

Russian Federation. In addition, five branches of Russian HEIs and one branch of a Ukrainian HEI operate on the territory of Transnistria. There is, however, only very little statistical information and very limited ways to verify any data's validity.

8.2 The development of the governance of the higher education system in Moldova[52]

The development of the HE system in Moldova in general and its governance in particular has been strongly shaped by the changing political forces in the country. To understand the developments in higher education, it is therefore necessary to consider the parties and coalitions that were shaping higher education policy in the country since its independence.

The following table provides an overview of the ruling parties and coalitions and the ministers of education in the respective cabinets:

Electoral period	*Ruling Party/Coalition*	*President*	*Prime Minister(s)*	*Minister(s) of Education*
1990-1994	Center-right Moldovan Popular Front (NSF)	Mircea Snegur	Mircea Druc; Valeriu Muravschi; Andrei Sangeli	Nicolae Mătcaș
1994-1998	Center-left Agrarian Democratic Party (ADP)	Mircea Snegur (1994-1996)	Andrei Sangeli; Ion Ciubuc	Petru Gaugas
1998-2001	Centre-right, liberal coalition	Petru Lucinschi (1997-2001)	Ion Ciubuc, Ion Sturza, Dumitru Braghis	Iacob Popovici, Anatol Gremalschi, Ion Guțu
2001-2005	Party of Communists of Moldova	Vladimir Voronin	Vasile Tarlev	Ilie Vancea, Gheorghe Sima, Valentin Beniuc
2005-2009	Left-right coalition, led by Party of Communists of Moldova	Vladimir Voronin	Vasile Tarlev, Zinaida Greceanii	Victor Țvircun, Larisa Șavga

[52] Parts of this chapter have been published in Middell, Reinhardt, and Bischof (2016). The book "The politics of higher education reforms in central and eastern Europe. Development challenges of the Republic of Moldova" by Lucia Padure (2009a) has contributed significantly to this section. I would also like to thank Nicolae Toderas of the Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative in Romania for making his unpublished thesis available to me for the writing of this chapter.

2009-2012	Alliance for European Integration led by Liberal Party	Mihai Ghimpu, Vlad Filat, Marian Lupu (*all acting*)	Vlad Filat	Leonid Bujor, Mihail Şleahtiţchi
2012-2015	Alliance for European Integration led by Liberal Party	Nicolae Timofti	Vlad Filat, Iurie Leancă, Chiril Gaburici, Valeriu Streleț	Maia Sandu, Corina Fusu

Table 19: Overview of the ruling parties and governments in the Republic of Moldova 1990-2015

8.2.1 Experimentation and laisser-faire after independence (1991-1994)

The post-Soviet era (1989 – 1994) started off a period of national revival and de-ideologization of higher education. This period was characterized by new State institutions such as the Ministry of Education and by the emergence of private higher education in the young Republic. During the early 1990s, there was little regulation and no formal accreditation procedure, which gave entrepreneurial and politically connected individuals a large latitude of discretion. Philosophically, the ideological goals of political democratization and economic liberalization meant a decentralization of governance of the higher education system (Padure, 2009b). To achieve this in higher education (HE), the intention was for the Ministry of Education (MoE) to devolve some of its powers to specialized and autonomous agencies (Toderaş, 2012b).

Some changes were quickly implemented. Elections for university rectors were held and the mandatory job placement of graduates was abolished. First experiments were conducted with developing the *bacalaureat* as a national centralized test for university admission, as it was conducted in Romania. The firsts *bacalaureat* exams were held in 1996. The economic disruption, the decline in funding, the political instability and the disappearance of many of the institutions of the former USSR, however, led to an policy vacuum which hampered qualitative development (Padure, 2009a). The reforms which did take place, thus did not follow a coherent pattern or strategy. As Padure (2009b) quotes a policymaker of the time *"…the first years of independence represented a period of legal nihilism in education, when Soviet regulations were declared invalid in the Republic of Moldova, while local regulations were missing"*. Within HEIs, new study programs were developed and the freedom of HEIs, in the absence of any regulatory framework, was basically boundless. This legal vacuum likewise allowed the number of both public and private to mushroom, often to the detriment of their quality (Tofan & Bischof, in preparation). Only in 1995 did the new law on Education bring about a new structure and order to the higher education sphere.

The development of the HE system during the 1990ies was strongly influenced by the exchange with Romania, which became a model in many areas (Toderas, 2012). Experts from the Romanian Ministry of Education and from the Romanian Institute of Sciences of Education were heavily engaged in the

development of the first Law on Education. New universities were founded using the model of Romanian HEIs, such as the Academy of Economic Studies (ASEM) in Moldova, the University of Cahul. Romanian professors were among the first to teach in new study programs in the social sciences. What is more, the Romanian government provided scholarships to Moldovan students, amounting, according to one estimate, to over 50.000 beneficiaries during the 1990ies and 2000s (Toderas, 2012).

8.2.2 Attempts to establish impartial instruments to regulate quality (1994-2001)

In 1994, the agrarian party, mainly composed of the directors of collective farms and former mid-level Communist nomenklatura, won the parliamentary elections. The first law on education went into effect in 1995 and defined what constitutes a higher education institution (which, other things, legitimized private higher education) and also gave university senates the power to elect rectors, while giving the MoE the power to confirm (and thus veto) them. During the second part of the 1990s, the state tried to reassert its role in the governance of higher education.

In the absence of a quality assurance system following independence, a large number of private HEIs had been founded, often without sufficient resources, teaching staff or material base, which were issuing degrees (Interview MD No. 12, 2016). The *Law on the Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions* (1997) foresaw an academic evaluation and accreditation of education of all levels of education, under any form of ownership (public and private) or ministerial subordination, would be performed under the remit of the Ministry of Education. Two years later, the *Law on the Endorsement of the Regulations on the Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions* (1999) codified the procedure of quality assurance. This law foresaw quality assurance through state control and accreditation. Modelled after similar structures in Romania, two agencies were established to regulate the quality of research and teaching: The *National Council for Accreditation and Attestation (Consiliul Naţional pentru Acreditare şi Atestare – CNAA)* for research and academic staff and the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (*Consiliul Naţional de Evaluare şi Acreditare Academică - CNEAA)* for teaching and study programs. One of them was to be successful, while the other was not.

The National Council for Accreditation and Attestation (CNAA) was founded in 1999 as a legally autonomous agency concerned with research and scientific-pedagogical qualifications, as well as the recognition of degrees and titles (Art. 90 of the Code on Science and Innovation of the Republic of Moldova). CNAA is therefore responsible for quality-assuring and recognizing PhD degrees, as well as academic positions such as professors or associate professors. PhD diplomas are granted by CNAA. Only since the 2014 code of education are universities allowed to operate doctoral schools and, given that they are accredited, may issue their own PhD degrees.

The CNAA accredits HEIs based on their research capacity as either “profile members” or “affiliate members” of the Moldovan Academy of Sciences (ASM), which gives them access to public research

funding for projects in a specific area, either alone (profile members) or in cooperation with the Academy of Sciences (associated members). The strong presence of the ASM gives it a powerful role in the distribution of research budgets, which has led to criticism from the university sector (Toderaş, 2012b). The CNAA has lobbied against including doctoral education as third tier of university education, which was only included in the 2015 law on education, presumably fearing a loss of power and influence (Toderaş, 2012b). The Soviet-era Higher Attestation Commission (*VAK*) is clearly visible as a model for the CNEAA. As one interviewee pointed out in this context *"It is exactly the Soviet System which was just renamed and the system remained the same." (Interview MD No. 2, 2016).* The CNAA did succeeded, however, in institutionalizing a unified and transparent system of evaluation and accreditation of HEIs as well as assuring consistency in the granting of titles and scientific degrees, which is something that cannot be said for quality assurance of education.

Also in 1999, through an amendment to the Law on education[53] and government decision in 2000, the **National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation of educational institutions of the Republic of Moldova** *(Consiliul Naţional de Evaluare şi Acreditare Academică - CNEAA)* was established[54] to address the legal vacuum in which HEIs were offering study programs. Prior to 1999, the assessment and accreditation of educational institutions was seen as a prerogative of the Ministry of Education. However, the Ministry had not managed to establish transparent criteria and procedures for the evaluation, authorization and accreditation of HEIs. The steep increase of the number of private HEI – which were not rarely even using the same physical spaces, learning resources, and teaching and administrative staff of public HEIs – was seen as a sign that the system was ineffective or even corrupt (Toderaş, 2012b). After the *Law on the Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions* (1997) had been passed, for some time no immediate steps were taken to establish such a structure, until Victor Scalnîi, a professor from the Technical University of Moldova was charged with the task of setting up an agency, developing structures, criteria, processes, by himself (Interview MD No. 12, 2016). The *Law on the Endorsement of the Regulations on the Evaluation and Accreditation of Educational Institutions* (1999) then codified the procedure of quality assurance.

CNEAA was composed of a president, a secretary, and nine members representing the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of the Economy, the Ministry of Finance, the Academy of Sciences, and CNEA (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 40). The Council developed and implemented accreditation procedures, conducted evaluations of private and public HEIs and granted accreditation to institutions and study programs. The procedure for accreditation of HEIs and study programs followed the internationally established model of self-evaluation according to established criteria such as teaching and research, staff, students, educational contents of study programs, technical and material infrastructure, and economic and financial indicators (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 41). The HEI was then visited by an expert commission ("*specialty*

[53] http://lex.justice.md/md/311272/

[54] Law 328-XIV of March 24 1999

commission") composed of peers which verified the self-assessment and drafted a report. The report was then discussed in the MoE and a decision is taken on accreditation or non-accreditation, which, pending confirmation by the government, entered into force by official publication. While CNEAA had a degree of autonomy, at no point in time could it be considered a truly independent organ of quality assurance. The law specified that the members of the Council and its committees were to be nominated by the government and that the Council did not have neither autonomy regarding its internal organization nor regarding the evaluation and accreditation procedures, criteria, and decisions, which had to be approved by the government. Nevertheless, although not completely independent, CNEAA did manage to resist influence from the government. In one noteworthy case, one large private university in Moldova opened a program of medicine. It successfully attracted a significant number of free-paying international students (mostly from Arab countries). It did not, however, have own facilities to teach medicine and relied primarily on facilities and teaching staff from the State Medical University. The rector of the university had the political support from the government and in parliament, as well as the president, which all tried to pressure CNEAA into granting accreditation to the program. CNEAA refused and subsequently had to defend its position in front of the president of Moldova and a commission of all of the former ministers of health of Moldova (Interview MD No. 12, 2016).

By 1999, however, Moldova's economic and social situation had reached a low point: Its economic output had declined to only 35 per cent of its 1989 level (the second largest decline in GDP of all CEE countries), a quarter of its population was working illegally abroad and the government never regained control of the breakaway region of Transnistria (Padure, 2009b). Budget austerity, privatization programs, and fiscal reform stabilized Moldova's exchange rates but contributed to a further decline in GDP and widening of the budget deficit and foreign debt. In the 1998 Parliamentary elections, the Party of Communists of Moldova had already won 40%. A number of smaller parties managed to form a government, which continued along the path of neoliberal reform. Their government was marked by further privatization reforms, cuts to pensions, soaring public and private debt, an impoverishing population, and often changing prime-ministers and ministers of education (three ministers between 1998 and 2001). The economic decline led to shrinking public budgets for HEIs. During this time, the number of private HEIs rose sharply from four in 1994 to 32 in 2000, as did the number of fee paying students. At the same time, it became typical for university teachers to hold several concurrent positions at different institutions. All of these developments led to deteriorating standards of higher education (Padure, 2009b).

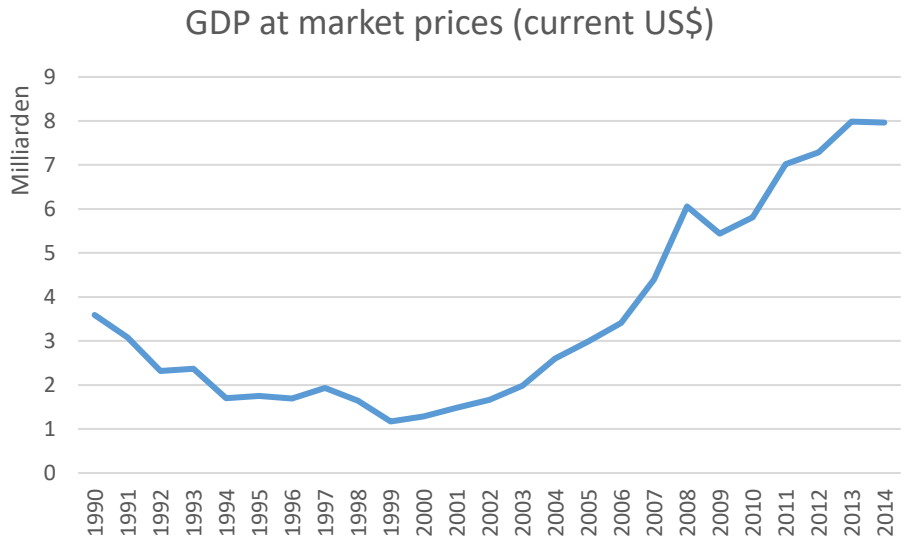

Figure 14: GDP Moldova at market prices (current US$). Source: World Bank Data

Between 2000 and 2013, Moldova's economic situation recovered and the economy grew. However, over a third of the adult population is working abroad and remittances from Moldovans abroad account for almost 24,9% of Moldova's GDP, the fifth-highest percentage in the world. As of 2013, higher education was financed approximately with € 75m (1.26% of GDP), and R&D € 24m (0.4% of GDP).

Regarding access to higher education, the centralized bacalaureat exam was rolled out to ever more lyceums in Moldova since 1996.

8.2.3 Re-Centralization of powers in the Ministry of Education (2001-2006)

During the 1990ies, international donor organisations such as the Soros Foundations had significantly supported the transfer of practices and experience from Romanian universities to the universities in the Republic of Moldova, on issue from university management to teaching approaches and techniques, evaluation, to curriculum development (Toderas, 2012). In 2000, the European Commission launched its TEMPUS Program for Moldova in 2000, which supported the alignment of the Moldovan HE system with the Bologna Process. In preparation for Moldova joining the Bologna Process, between 2002-2005, a large number of conferences, study visits and internships were organized at HEIs in Romania, to promote institutional quality assurance systems and institutional governance (Toderas, 2012). Simultaneously, however, the communist government discontinued efforts promoting per-capita financing in favor of state-determined orders for study places and set out to re-centralize the HE system. A prominent example was the area of quality assurance.

The CNEAA had started to conduct its first accreditations when in 2001 the communist party came into power and the new minister Gheorghe Sima abolished it as of August 2002. The former head of CNEAA relates this to their independent stance:

> *"We began to critically evaluate their work [..], we criticized the ministry in that it did not fulfill certain [of its] tasks. Well, they did not like this, they wanted the council [CNEAA] to be subordinated to them, as a unit of the ministry. And that the minister could give it orders "do this or do that". This did not happen, and in principle, because of it, they completely transformed us. Not one [of the staff of CNEAA] was kept on the new team [at the ministry]" (Interview MD No. 12, 2016)*

All of its functions were transferred to the **Directorate of Higher Education Accreditation** (*Direcţia Acreditarea Învăţământ Superior*) within the Ministry of Education. Accreditation decisions were taken by the *Colegiul ministerului educaţiei*, the governing body of the MoE. The right to establish, reorganize or close HEIs was even transferred from the Ministry of Education to the presidential administration itself. This decision was taken in spite of explicit disagreement by most Moldovan HEIs, the Rectors' Council, and international experts. The reasons for this decision are difficult to clearly delineate. Most respondents identify the minister as the sole actor behind this decision and perceived it as arbitrary and rash (Interview MD No. 10, 2016; Interview MD No. 6, 2016).

> *"Strictly speaking, the decision to close this body was arbitrary and politically motivated. Nobody clearly said why but literally overnight, they decided to close it."* (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

Most observers as well as the then-director of CNEAA, Valentin Scalnîi, attribute it to the view of the new Minister of Education, Ilie Vancea, that the Ministry of Education should have all areas of the higher education system under its direct control (Interview MD No. 12, 2016). When CNEAA was abolished, the normative basis and criteria it had established for accreditation of study programs and HEIs, which it had established was not annulled but remained in place after 2002 (Interview MD No. 10, 2016). The relative independence that CNEAA had been able to maintain, however, ended with its integration into the Ministry. As one former high-ranking ministry official remembers:

> *"There were cases […] when the accreditation commission took the decision to not grant accreditation to an HEI and it was all clear within the ministry, there were reports and documents with the decision, the college of the minister of education took the decision to grant the accreditation. There were a number of such cases"* (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

The Directorate of Higher Education Accreditation conducted evaluations and accreditations from 2002 until 2008, bringing a degree of order back into the higher education system. During this time, a number of private HEIs were closed down or voluntarily ceased operations due to stricter accreditation requirements[55]. All public HEIs retained their accreditation. As one former member of the department for accreditation recalls:

[55] For example, the amendment of 2003 to the law of education (art. 36) stated that private HEIs need to have a base capital of 1 million MDL. In 2003 this was quite exorbitant (Toderas, 2012)

"[Moldova] had just undergone the Bologna Reforms. This is why the agency did a great job in ensuring the quality of HE. […] As you know, before in our country like in all countries [of the former Soviet Union] there had been a surge of private universities and order left much to be desired. Some universities even were afraid of accreditation and closed by themselves. This is why I believe there was a large effect on higher education " (Interview MD No. 11, 2016)

8.2.4 Creation of dysfunctional public structures (2006-2009)

In 2003 Moldova began to prepare to join the Bologna Process, which officially took place in 2005. This required changes to a number of laws, structural reforms in higher education, a new nomenclature of study programs and a number of other changes, among them an orientation of the quality assurance system at the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). As one former ministry official remembers:

"I the context of the Bologna Process we studied the experience of other countries and it was clear that within the framework of the MoE it is not good to have such a structure. […] This is why they closed it within the Ministry because it did not correspond with the tendencies in Europe. It was clear that we needed to create another structure. […] this was an idea from within the Ministry. But, unfortunately, they closed one but did not establish the other" (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

In 2006, trying to adapt to the ESG and responding to a certain pressure from the Council of Europe and the European Commission, to separate the MoE from evaluation, authorization and accreditation of HEIs, the Moldovan government closed the department for quality assurance within the MoE and transferred its responsibilities to a newly created **Agency for Assessment and Evaluation** (*Agenţia de Evaluare şi Examinare - AEE*)[56], a public institution under the remit of the MoE[57]. A national commission for Evaluation and Accreditation (*Comisia Naţională de Evaluare şi Acreditare*) (made up in their majority of members of the MoE) was to take decisions based on the recommendations of AEE. The agency was initially designed to take care of quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation of all levels of education. While already charged with a very wide range of responsibilities, the agency was burdened with additional tasks for which it was ill-prepared, such as the organization and administration of examinations in secondary education, or the organization of science Olympiads and national and international competitions. As a consequence, the communist government had difficulties finding a director for this new agency who was knowledgeable in both secondary and tertiary education, willing and capable to run the agency, as well as politically opportune. In the end, the agency only occupied itself with non-tertiary education (Interview MD No. 6, 2016)[58]. It did, however, finalize the roll-out of the centralized

[56] Hotărîrea Nr.1469

[57] The Agenţia de Asigurare a Calităţii was reorganized by Government Decision GD 72 from 10.03.2015 into a "National Agency for Curriculum and Assessment", an administrative authority subordinated to Ministry of Education.

[58] The agency continued to work on examinations and curriculum in secondary education until 2014 when it was renamed into *Agenţia Naţională pentru Curriculum şi Evaluare*

bacalaureat exam at all lyceums in Moldova, which, in 2006, became a mandatory exam for all *lyceum* graduates. By 2008 it had become obvious to the Communist party that they would lose the next elections and they would lose their influence in the Ministry of Education. Among other decrees, in November 2008, the Government issued a decree creating the **Quality Assurance Agency** (*Agenţie de Asigurare a Calităţii - AAC*) and approved a set of new regulations. The objective was to create a transparent, integrated quality assurance system for both secondary and tertiary education. Possibly due to the lack of time for its elaboration, instead of clarity, the concept for the new agency created even more confusion and uncertainty among its stakeholders. The QA processes foreseen for higher education and those for primary, secondary and upper secondary education were not clearly differentiated. Toderaş (2012b) claims that in addition to these design flaws some structures and departments were created not to best serve the foreseen processes, but to guarantee the influence of certain individuals and their special interests within the future structures.

At the same time, in 2008, shortly before the new elections, a new code of education was proposed by the communist government. This code, however, had been so full of contradictions that it was never passed by parliament (Interview MD No. 6, 2016). When the parliament majorities changed and the Alliance for European Integration led by Liberal Party took control of the ministry, the Department of Accreditation within the Ministry had been closed, but the new agency had not been founded. This left the higher education system without a functioning quality assurance body at all[59] (Toderaş, 2012b).

8.2.5 The long struggle for a new system of governance (2009-2015)

By 2009, the establishment of an independent quality assurance agency based on a normative-driven, pluralist and representative peer system had been attempted twice and had failed to materialize. The situation was complicated. Political instability had so far obstructed the implementation of several reforms and resulted in a specific mixing of "traditional" Soviet hierarchical thinking in governing HE with new educational principles and institutions. The inherent contradictions of this confluence were clearly visible in the establishment of a quality assurance framework for HE: On the one hand, the ascension of Moldova to the European Higher Education Area had created a situation of "coercive isomorphism" insofar as the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)*[60] provided a strong model as to what kind of quality assurance system would have be developed in order to become part of the European Higher Education Area (Toderaş, 2012b). On the other hand, political considerations, vested interests of the academic oligarchy, corruption in the HE system and the economic and financial difficulties of HEIs as well as of those working within them created powerful forces of inertia and resistance to change (Ciurea, Berbeca, Lipcean, & Gurin, 2012). As a result of this, Toderaş (2012a,

[59] Among other things, the agency was not truly independent as its decisions needed to be confirmed by the MoE, the nomination of key staff was done by the Ministry and the consequences of the outcomes of its evaluations were very limited (Ciurea et al., 2012).
[60] http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg/

p. 4) noted that the higher education system in Moldova was "*drifting in the attempt to identify and adopt a style of governance, according to current models of Western systems. [but], still remain[ed] dominated by institutional arrangements established in the post-war period and marginally modified during subsequent decades.* The general lack of confidence in decentral structures among policymakers, a strong reliance of the political elite on authoritarian relational systems, and the interference of other authorities and special interests further created conditions in which strong and independent institutions of quality assurance had had difficulties to emerge (Toderaş, 2012b, p. 254).

Without any legal procedure in place, study programs which were established after 2008 could not undergo the mandatory periodic evaluations and accreditations and were therefore operating in a state of semi-illegality (Ciurea et al., 2012)[61]. Aside from the legal limbo HEIs found themselves in, university graduates sometimes experienced that their study programs were not recognized internationally due to their missing accreditation, a particular problem for many Moldovan students who wanted to transfer to Romania or Russia, where their degrees were only recognized if their university was accredited (Interview MD No. 8, 2016). The growing internationalization of some Moldovan universities[62], the wish for more academic partnerships (such as though *Erasmus+*) and academic mobility were further important reasons for universities to want to be officially accredited (Reinhardt, 2011).

Both universities and government were frustrated by the state of affairs. As shown by results published by Toderas (2012b), by 2011, the vast majority of decision makers in the higher education system[63] felt the urgency to set up a coherent and independent system of quality assurance. It was widely felt that quality assurance in Moldova was not functional (Reinhardt, 2011): On the one hand, quality management departments existed within Moldovan HEIs. There were quality management units at the university and at the faculty levels, and vice rectors in charge of quality management. These positions had been mandated by a ministerial order inspired by recommendations of the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (ESG). These positions were funded directly by the ministry of education yet they remained relatively formalistic as those who held them were often not trained in quality assurance, were lacking in technical equipment, and their activities were often conducted with little interaction between the quality units and academic staff[64] (Reinhardt, 2011). HEIs who had experienced the process of evaluation and accreditation by the MoE between 2001 and 2008 regarded it as intransparent and had a rather low level of trust in the fairness and objectivity of procedure (Ciurea et al., 2012). The Ministry had the authority to set the level of financing to HEIs, the decision to grant or refuse accreditation to a particular

[61] While some ministers (Şavga and Bujor) pledged to create the agency, their short terms in office (less than 1 year each) prevented any success (Ciurea et al. (2012)).
[62] such as the high number of international students for instance at the Medical University
[63] Toderas (2012) surveyed Rectors (9), Vice-Rectors (18), Deans (38), Vice-Deans (10), Heads of Department (145), Representatives of the MoE (11) as well as other experts on educational policy and (19)
[64] A notable exception was the Technical University which had elaborated guidelines on self-evaluation which were applied in the review of all its study programs at BA and MA level.

HEI, or to authorize or refuse new programs of study. The lack of a coherent QA system and a lack of clear criteria for the Ministry's decisions, which were felt by some to depend on political considerations rather than performance, were conducive to the production of voluminous reports, which, however, in reality did not have real impact on HEI strategies (Ciurea et al., 2012). In short, the system had been fostering a culture of compliance, rather than one of quality (Toderaş, 2012b).

At the same time, however, integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) remained a priority of the government and having a functional QA system at institutional and country-level was seen as crucial not only for achieving this goal[65]. After the communist party lost their parliament majority to the Alliance for European Integration led by the Liberal Party in 2009, and the code of education, which had been proposed by the Communist government was scrapped, work began to draft a new version of the code. Especially the universities had long called for a revision of the 1995 code on education, which had been amended multiple times and did not reflect the Post-Bologna realities while having accumulated several contradictions. The Moldovan Rectors' Council had already in 2008 presented to the Ministry of Education and Youth a systematic analysis of the need for revision and consolidation of the multiple legal provisions in force and their alignment with the demands of the Bologna Process.

The Ministry of Education was determined to reintroduce an agency for quality assurance and accreditation and the new Minister of Education, Leonid Bujor, and his team set out to address a number of other issues as well. The Rectors' Council, the Academy of Science and other interest groups in parliament would participate in a debate which took almost four years to conclude. What further complicated reaching a consensus were the frequent changes in ministers. With Leonid Bujor, Mihail Şleahtiţchi, and Maia Sandu, there were three different ministers of education between 2009 and 2012. The first draft was published for debate in early 2010. Several times, a new version of the Code of Education was worked out by the Council of Rectors and the MoE, only to be sent to parliament to be refused or changed. An agreement in parliament could only be reached on the third variant of the Code of education which finally passed in 2014.

8.2.5.1 Autonomy, governance, and a viable HE system: the EUniAM and ATHENA projects

The recommendations made by the Council of Rectors on the 2010 versions represented a radical restructuring of the current governance arrangements in higher education calling for a decentralization of control of the educational system, university autonomy in academic, organizational, financial areas, a new funding formula for differentiated funding according to educational institutions performance, and

[65] The consolidated education development strategy 2011-2015 and the "Education Strategy 2020" highlighted the objective to establish a functioning National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education. The Strategy of European Integration of the Republic of Moldova and of the EU-Moldova Action Plan, which stipulated the preparation of Moldova's integration into the European Research Area and the Community R&D Framework Programs such as FP-7 also called for re-establishing a quality assurance system.

a monitoring of the overall efficiency of the educational system. Two TEMPUS projects supported a comparative analysis of the status quo and the development of recommendations.

The TEMPUS ATHENA project "*Fostering Sustainable and Autonomous Higher Education Systems in the Eastern Neighboring Area*"[66] was a multi-country structural measure project with Moldova, Ukraine and Armenia as beneficiary countries which ran between mid Oct. 2012 – mid Oct. 2015. Project coordinator was the European University Association. Within the project, the focus lay on university autonomy and funding, study visits to European countries and policy development and regional benchmarking. The project resulted in a rating of university autonomy, analogous to the EUA University Autonomy benchmarking project[67] in EU countries.

The TEMPUS project „Enhancing University Autonomy in Moldova" (EuniAM)[68] ran from 2012-2016 and was a structural measure aimed at enhancing the university autonomy in the Republic of Moldova by proposing legislative changes to the higher education legal framework. On 17.02.2011, the Rectors' Council and the TEMPUS Office in Moldova organized a workshop on "University Governance: modern approaches in the context of EU experience" involving John Reilly, a UK Bologna Expert and former Director of Academic Administration at the University of Kent (Amariei, 2013). Out of this meeting, a project took shape which was in part the initiative of new minister of education, Maia Sandu, to reorganize the governance structures of the Moldovan HE system, and in part on the initiative of Larisa Bugaian, vice-rector of the Technical University of Moldova, and was promoted by the Rectors' Council of Moldova.

The goal was to study and compare different good practices in Europe in order to inform policy-making in Moldova. The cases were selected from small countries which ranked high on different aspects of university autonomy on the corresponding EUA ranking[69]. The existing Moldovan system of higher education was analyzed with a view to university autonomy, the selected good practices were studied and a benchmarking on organizational, financial, personnel, and academic autonomy was conducted. The stated goal of the project was to create a more effective, more efficient, more productive, and more quality driven higher education system, ending sub-critical subject duplications and creating institutions of the necessary size and resource base for good governance and management.

Through the participation of eight Moldovan universities, the Moldovan rectors' council, the MoE and the Ministry of Finance, the project involved a large number of decision-makers and led to an increased awareness of the need for reform and a growing consensus on the type of necessary reforms.

The recommendations of the project were quite far-reaching and encompassed virtually the entire architecture of the Moldovan HE landscape (EUniAM, 2015). When the 2014 draft for the new code of

[66] http://www.athena-tempus.eu/
[67] http://www.university-autonomy.eu/
[68] 530740-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-DKTEMPUS-SMGR http://www.euniam.aau.dk/
[69] http://www.university-autonomy.eu/

education was available, an assessment was prepared and recommendations were made (Reilly, 2015). Among other things, the project proposed to reorganize the Moldovan HE sector and merge HEIs from 31 into 7, merging the research institutes of the Academy of Science with the universities, creating new funding mechanisms and bodies for research and teaching & learning, and creating new governance arrangements between the government and universities as well as within universities. Regarding the latter, they recommended the establishment of university boards as governing bodies overseeing the university management' activities and finances. It also recommended a term limit for university rectors, and suggested clear role descriptions, performance criteria, and reporting obligations.

A reduction in the number of HEIs, while being regarded as necessary by many stakeholders, was never taken into closer consideration. Other proposals such as the ones concerning financial autonomy and university charters did not meet strong resistance and were taken into account in the final 2014 new law on education. Yet others proved strongly contagious and caused a long and protracted fight between the MoE, the Academy of Science and university rectors. These issues were the establishment of Strategic Development Councils, the role of university research and the establishment of a new quality assurance agency.

8.2.5.2 The struggle on the establishment of Strategic Development Councils

One of the key recommendations put forward by the EUniAM project Minister of Education Maia Sandu had been the establishment of so-called Strategic Development Councils as governing boards and setting a fixed term limit for university rectors. In the first draft proposals, the Councils were designed as governing boards having, among other responsibilities, the function of electing rectors, developing policy and demanding accountability.

While most Rectors agreed in principle to the differentiation of governance and management and to the idea of governing boards, there were at the same time strong objections to the concrete proposals. Several interviewees who had participated in the discussions of the Rectors' Council explained this resistance with fear of political influence to the detriment of the universities in question. They related this fear to the Soviet and post-Soviet experiences. In the USSR, rectors always needed to be high-ranking members of the Communist party and could be removed at a stroke of a pen based on ideological or opportunistic considerations. After independence, political influence had often been used for rent-seeking behaviors, such as "privatizing" certain university properties. Some of the participating rectors argued that in powerful governing boards, MoE and MoF delegates could be used as agents of political parties. They argued that party interests (such as the potential of universities to pressure students to vote for a certain party) rather than academic merit or strategy might becoming the determining factor for university policy and the election of rectors (Interview MD No. 9, 2016). Other argued that the small size of the country would make it impossible for such advisory boards to be independent, because their members would in many cases be from other Moldovan HEIs (Interview MD No. 3, 2016).

On the other hand, the impression of some actors was that these reservations were but a pretense for rectors to justify keeping their authority over finances and strategy and not becoming accountable to a powerful new body within the university. As one respondent states:

> *"The rectors insisted that [everything] should remain as before: The rector as the executive body but also president of the senate. For me, how the prime minister could be prime minister and also at the same time the president of the parliament sounds stupid. They insisted to be like this" (Interview MD No. 2, 2016)*

In the end, the rectors largely prevailed and a compromise was reached: Strategic development councils were included into the 2014 code of education (art. 104) and did include external stakeholder representatives. Boards were to coordinate the development of the Strategic and Institutional Development Plans, monitor and evaluate the efficiency of using the financial resources, approve enrollment numbers and the level of tuition fees, take decisions regarding the development and consolidation of the institution's facilities, the launch and closure of the study programs, the methodology for remuneration and motivation of personnel, entrepreneurship activities, public-private partnerships, cooperation with the businesses, as well as organize and carry out the election for rector's vacancy (Code of Education, 2014). Their rights address a lot of crucial areas of institutional management and governance. They are, however, formulated sufficiently vaguely to allow for very different interpretations. The degree to which Strategic Development Councils will occupy a strong or weak role in institutional governance thus likely will depend on the institution, the rector and the individual board members (Interview MD No. 13, 2017). While in some HEIs, boards are becoming powerful oversight bodies, in others they became purely advisory bodies, while the senate – presided by the rector – remained the main decision-taking organ. As one respondent states:

> *In the new code it is the same as it was before. […] At the moment I think that at my university this advisory council is just a formality. And the president of the council is just a formality" (Interview MD No. 2, 2016)*

Likewise, a term-limit for rectors was indeed introduced in the new code, but a transition period of 10 years was granted to acting rectors, rendering this change inconsequential at least in the short term.

8.2.5.3 The role of university research and doctoral training

The second large battle-ground was university research and whether universities should be engaged in doctoral training. The introduction of doctoral education as the third cycle of university studies is was introduced to the Bologna Process in Berlin in 2003 (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2003). Because of the division of education and research which had been maintained in Moldova, this topic was hotly debated. For the new code of education, CNAA had studied different international experiences with doctoral schools. The Moldovan Academy of Science was strongly opposed to granting the universities the right to issue doctoral degrees and providing funding for PhD students, which was

perceived as an attack on its position in the national research and innovation system. At the end, doctoral schools were indeed introduced. A proposal to found an impartial council for research funding met strong resistance from ASM (Interview MD No. 6, 2016) and was postponed to the discussion on the national code of research.

8.2.5.4 Regulating access to higher education

By 2006, the centralized *bacalaureat* exam had become compulsory for all lyceum graduates. Until 2011, admission to higher education had still been possible for graduates from general secondary schools and for holders of Certificate of studies (Atestat). In 2011, by ministerial order[70] the *bacalaureat* Diploma became the exclusive entry requirement for higher education. This was widely seen as significantly raising the quality of students but restricted contributed to the already problematic shortage of students and thus funding for HEIs.

8.2.5.5 The establishment of a new quality assurance agency

The TEMPUS project "*Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Moldova*" (QUAEM)[71] (2012-2016) was developed in the fall of 2011 jointly by the University of Leipzig, the German higher education consultancy firm CHE Consult[72] and a large number of Moldovan and European partners. The goal was to bring together all Moldovan stakeholders from Ministries, a range of strong universities with different disciplinary and geographic profiles, as well as stakeholder organizations representing students and universities. The project's objective was to support the Moldovan higher education system to make quality assurance functional. As quality assurance systems are highly dependent on the institutional context, traditions and existing relationships between the actors in the system, any attempt to transplant a "best practice" from one country without adapting it to the local context would be doomed to fail. The project design tried to take great care to support the Moldovan partners in developing their own system that might be useful and functional in the Moldovan institutional context. Therefore, from its inception, the project addressed all stakeholders involved in quality assurance in the Republic of Moldova: HEI rectors and vice rectors in charge with QA, members of QM structures at the Moldovan HEIs, academic staff and students, as well as Ministry of Education staff (to be) involved in the evaluation and accreditation processes of the new QA agency ANACIP. To support the development of quality assurance in the country, the project conducted activities on several levels, including internal quality management, evaluation, accreditation, student engagement and the link between QA and strategic management.

[70] Ministerial Order nr. 891 of 24.12.2009
[71] 530537-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-DETEMPUS-SMGR
[72] www.che-consult.de/. Within the QUAEM project, the author was responsible for quality assurance and monitoring of the project results

Some technical equipment was supplied to QA offices of project universities, QA staff were invited to study different approaches to internal quality management from Germany, Catalonia, Romania, Bosnia, and Denmark as well as different approaches to external evaluation and accreditation. The project acted as a laboratory for developing and testing exercises in self-evaluation, peer review, and accreditation. The partner universities conducted self-evaluations reflecting on their strengths, weaknesses and development strategies and visited each other in peer review exercises. Conducting a peer review exercise in a supportive frame of mind in the context of accreditation was new to the Moldovan HE system and the participating universities stated that the exercise had been most insightful for them. Building on this experience, the six project universities each prepared self-evaluation reports for three study programs (a total of 18) from which the four strongest were selected to undergo international accreditation by the German accreditation agency AQAS. The criteria for this accreditation had been jointly developed by the project partners based on the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance – ESG (ENQA, 2005b). In addition, the Ministry of Education made funds available for the international accreditation of 12 more study programs. For the first time for many universities, they were asked to conduct self-evaluations of their study programs in preparation for accreditation. In this way, the six project universities gained first-hand experience in a new type of accreditation and a possible model emerged for the procedures of the future Moldovan quality assurance agency ANACIP. The universities that did undergo the accreditation procedures reported it to be a highly valuable learning experience which not only gave them the opportunity to self-reflect but also get a constructive outside perspective on their activities. Last but not least, a special focus was put on the role of students in quality assurance. For one, the local and national students' unions were involved in all project activities and trainings. In addition, 30 students participated in a 1-week-long workshop by students of the European Students Union (ESU). A group of selected students had a chance to visit the European Students' Union in Brussels and engage with representatives from the Belgian national students' unions. Finally, a sustainability action plan for student involvement in Moldova was developed with the project partners, ANACIP, and the MoE.

In summary, the work done within the QUAEM project tried to address many of the challenges that have until now held back the development of an improvement-oriented quality culture in the Moldovan higher education system. By the end of the project, a sizable number of academics and students had participated in trainings and discussions on quality assurance. Project participants underscored how valuable the project was for them and their understanding of quality assurance for their own study programs, and the future system of accreditation in Moldova. A significant number of students had been trained who were willing to be engaged in quality assurance activities. Through common workshops, conferences, training, seminars, and participant observation, the project has helped to form a community of trained university teachers, administrators and students as well as key individuals at the Ministry of Education and the newly created Quality Assurance Agency ANACIP. The project has helped to foster links between Moldovan experts and academics and those of universities and quality assurance agencies

in other European countries. At the end of the project it has gained a large visibility among the higher education community in Moldova. Maybe even more importantly, when ANACIP was finally founded in 2015, all of its staff and the majority of its governing council consisted of persons who had been trained within the project. The accreditation methodology and criteria that had been developed within the project provided ANACIP with a model for its own methodology, as did a project with the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), which was invited to conduct the accreditations of law programs in the framework of a justice reform project in 2013/2014, and a project with the Estonian Quality Assurance agency EKKA, which won a tender from the Fund for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia to support the development of ANACIP. Both of these activities contributed to the work of the new Moldovan quality assurance agency.

While the project was widely lauded as a great success, the establishment of a new quality assurance agency was a fraught journey. In 2013, the education law was amended to specify that the function of evaluation, authorization and accreditation should be independent of the Ministry of Education[73]. The new Moldovan quality assurance agency ANACIP was officially founded in October 2013[74] and took up its operation in 2014/2015 in the form of an interim council which was to establish the structures, procedures and evaluation criteria. There, however, the first rifts appeared between the agency-to-be and the Ministry of education. As one former member of the interim council recounts an episode after she was elected to the interim council:

> *"After her [Minister Maia Sandu] speech, I expected that she would congratulate us that we were selected and that she would wish us all the best but the conversation was a bit difficult, she was all on the high horse and she said that she founded this agency and if it does not work [as she wants it to] she would also close it again. " (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)*

When the interim council refused the structure that the Minister wanted the agency to assume and she initially refused to pay them. Only in 2015, after she had left, did the next minister agree that the former members of the interim board would be reimbursed as they had been promised. In early 2015, the new agency had to accreditate the doctoral schools for which it needed to quickly work out and apply a methodology.

As of May 2016, the political situation is far from stable. In 2014, a scandal of unprecedented proportions even for the notoriously corrupt elites in Moldova had shaken the macro-political context as it was discovered that $1 billion had disappeared from three Moldovan banks. On November 27, the Moldovan Government, headed by Prime Minister Iurie Leanca, secretly decided to bail out the three banks with $870 million in emergency loans, which caused a deficit in Moldovan public finances equivalent to an eighth of the country's GDP (BBC News, 2015). In response, the EU, International Monetary Fund and

[73] see Law 239 of 10/18/13, MO297-303 / 12.20.13 art.807
[74] Law nr.239 from 18.10.2013 on the modification of the law of education nr. 547-XIII of July 21, 1995.

World Bank froze their financial assistance to Moldova. Harsh cuts in public budgets and a steep devaluation of the Moldovan Lei followed. Despite the political instability and street protests that went on for over a year, nobody was indicted for the theft and the pro-European coalition managed to barely stay in power.

The new agency was still attempting to establish itself. It had taken roughly one year to find office space und infrastructure, hire staff and develop criteria and procedures for accreditation. Staff had been hired, but the low salaries typical of public service in Moldova and the uncertain situation had led several staff members to resign again. The new quality assurance agency has not yet begun to carry out accreditations of study programs and HEIs. Many observers see ANACIPs future in a doubtful light. A former member of the Ministry of Education makes note of this situation:

> *"Our [QA] agency is modeled according to the Romanian agency. […]I believe that that this is not very good because the conditions of its establishment were different, […] they founded it in such a format with a government support that was completely different. Here they founded it but the support…ask them yourself what their salary is. […] How can you demand from these people objectivity? […] They selected good people and they are all responsible and they are all trying. But under our conditions, you need to somehow motivate people. Lower salaries as theirs [at the agency] don't exist! These salaries are just not serious." (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)*

Others senior officials in the Ministry of Education recognize this situation but worry about the future of the agency:

> *"I got him [the president of ANACIP] the money. We need[ed] to take care of that. First, I found him two rooms to work. I understand that he was not happy. But he himself, [he should] go find [himself] space! Until he got to where he is now, another year has passed! […] we will soon have presidential elections and we don't know who will come, what they will support, who will support. If in a few months nothings happens, they will just smother him. […] Just as we founded the agency, we could close it by this evening" (Interview MD No. 6, 2016)*

At the same time, interests opposed to the functioning of the new QAA are working to change the institutional framework yet again:

> *"The Academy of Science is putting pressure on the Ministry to unify ANACIP with CNAA and to create some form of super-body where the functionaries and structures of CNAA will be the major force, because, you know, they are against ANACIP. […]I think they will not win this fight, it is very, very complicated because of ASM. They are a big body, they want to keep their competence as a ministry of science. They want to pay, distribute and evaluate research, and of course, when the same body is paying, distributing and evaluating, everything just remains inside of ASM, for universities there is practically nothing" (Interview MD No. 3, 2016)*

Others are doubtful of the Agency's independence. Indeed, according to the 2014 code of agency, the MoE and the government are the final decision-making organs for all decisions of ANACIP. Yet, in the context of Moldova's weak institutions, both personal ability and institutional independence are important to resist pressure on decision-making.

> *"I think to be independent and to take very hard decisions is important at the moment in Moldova. [But] the agency is not really independent. Still today the agency is dependent on the MoE. Because of the budget, because of the office and many, many other things. They are not independent to pay their own bills. […] They depend on the Ministry of Education. The influence, the internal influence and the political pressure will be used during the accreditation process which will start soon. At the moment we are in the mist between needs and realities." (Interview MD No. 2, 2016)*

While the 2014 new law of education did bring about significant changes, the analysis of the code done within the framework of the EUniAM project (Reilly, 2015) highlights that there remain many areas in which the State keeps the final control over universities. These include a regulation of personnel categories, categories, status, titles, work load, and even types of tasks that different university staff carry out. The Ministry and government in charge of developing educational standards and – while leaving the development of accreditation criteria to ANACIP – retains the power veto them if need be. Article 102 defines management bodies which must be established by HEIs and article 100 even foresees for the ministry to develop framework regulation on student internships. While financial autonomy was granted, EUniAM recommendations for changing the funding formula and optimizing the number of HEI were not (as of 2015) taken into account.

8.3 The governance model of the Moldovan HE system by 2015

Especially the Bologna Process has had a considerable impact on the higher education system in Moldova and European-funded projects have influenced the development of its governance model. During the 2010s, the pace of change has accelerated. The final introduction of compulsory centralized testing and the closing of loopholes for non-eligible students effectively drained a corruption-prone and low-quality sector of the HE system of its income. Curricular autonomy within the state educational standards did grow. In 2015, an independent QAA was created and university autonomy was expanded.

Out of all three country cases, the governance of the Moldovan higher education system has arguably changed the least. The primary "mental model" regarding governance has remained the hierarchical chain of command. Governance and management is typically not separated: The Ministry of Education establishes legislation, and at the same time monitors and enforces it. In legislation as recent as the 2014 code of education, the MoE and even the Government preserve is the final decision-making organ for all major decisions, including those of the new quality assurance agency ANACIP. Within the ministry, the minister of education is the unquestionable final authority on all matters and has the power and

legitimacy to influence any decision within the ministry. The principle of hierarchy is enshrined in legislation in the fact that the MoE and the government remain the final instances to approve (or, therefore, to reject) any decisions of subordinate bodies. The government has also, until now kept the financing of public HEIs (via budget places) under its discretion. The effect of this is that the particular preferences of individual ministers of education are perceived as relevant and individuals as the decisive actors and true centers of power, much more than formal bodies and structures. On the side of the Ministry of Education, there is the expectation that they should steer the HE system and among HEIs many expect the ministry to provide the direction of development. In internal governance of HEIs, the principle of hierarchy is perpetuated in that rectors are simultaneously the head of the university administration, control university finances and strategy and are, at the same time, the head of the university senate. The powers of the newly stakeholder governance "strategic advisory boards" is unclearly defined and varies greatly between HEIs.

In terms of funding higher education, the governance approach has continued virtually unchanged since Soviet times by direct ministry allocation of state-funded study places based on a government forecast of the number of required specialists. The political gridlock as made a reform so far impossible and the underfunded Moldovan HE system continued to suffer from its fragmented structure. During a time of a declining population, in the academic year 2015/2016 Moldova maintained 32 HEIs for a declining population of about 3,380,000[75]. The large number of HEIs incurs expenses for buildings, administrative and teaching staff and the administration of the system that strain the capacities of a poor country such as Moldova. Public funding gets distributed into too many small institutions without the critical mass to excel in either teaching or research. Citing the above-mentioned reasons, in 2013, the EUniAM recommended that Moldovan universities be merged into just 6 or 7 universities. This proposal was quickly off the table as it was deemed politically impossible to implement, even though in principle most actors agree with the analysis. The strong voice of particular interests in the political sphere may also be responsible for the lack of focused use of limited resources in other areas. A similar situation presents itself in regard to distributing funding for doctoral schools at universities, which had been made possible by the 2014 code of education. Universities could apply to be granted government funding in 2015/2016. At the end, 43 out of 45 applications were granted, which presented the problem that the limited funding available had to be distributed among a large number of doctoral schools, resulting in a very low number of funded places per doctoral school (typically 1-2 PhD students per doctoral school).

[75] in the areas controlled by the central government, without Transnistria.

The following table summarizes aspects of the Moldovan model of governance in 2015:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="3">Changes in the relationship between HEIs and the state</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">State is not very effective at policy-setting and enforcing

State remains directly engaged in large number of HEI decisions

State supervising, steering from a distance and ex-post control is not wide-spread; relegation of control visible in some areas (QA)</td></tr>
<tr><th>Quality Assurance</th><th>Institutional Governance and Autonomy</th><th>Financing higher education</th></tr>
<tr><td>Study programs contents regulated by National Qualification Framework and framework plan for study programs

External control of licensing requirements by MoE

Accreditation of study programs by semi-independent QAA

No national ranking (yet)</td><td>Considerable power of HE leadership since Soviet times

Election of Rectors by Senate and Strategic Development Councils (unclear), confirmation by MoE

Strategic Development Councils with unclearly defined powers

Power of HEI leadership to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff</td><td>Line-item budgets from state funding; financial autonomy for other sources of income

Allocation of state funding via study places as well as number of tuition-funded places by government decision

Competition for students to fill places

Income-diversification from tuition-fees and other sources</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Regulation of access to HE</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Centralized testing with Bacalaureat

Number of fee-paying students regulated</td></tr>
</table>

Table 20: Elements of governance model of Moldovan System of Higher Education by 2015

9 Cross-National Comparison of Developments and Discussion of Results

The study set out to investigate how the governance of higher education systems of post-Soviet States has changed since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 until 2015 in the three States of Russia, Moldova, and Kazakhstan. In particular, the research questions were:

RQ 1. How has the governance of higher education systems changed between 1991 and 2015?
RQ 2. ***Is there a convergence towards a "global model" of higher education governance?***
RQ 3. ***Is there a common model of governance of higher education post-Soviet countries?***
RQ 4. ***What was the relative influence of national, regional and global factors on the development of the governance of higher education?***

Table 21: Research Questions (repeated)

The construct of "governance of higher education" was studied by analyzing the changes in *Educational Standards and Quality Assurance, the Regulation of Admission to Higher Education, Institutional Governance, Decision-Making and Institutional Autonomy,* and the *Financing of Higher Education*. Beyond providing an in-depth account of the developments (RQ1), the study intends to shed light on the question whether there is still a common model of governance of higher education post-Soviet countries (RQ3) , whether there is a process of convergence towards a "global model" of higher education governance (RQ2) and in which way global, regional, and national forces have shaped the paths of development in the three post-Soviet countries (RQ4).

The first section of this chapter will summarize the common and divergent developments and characterize each country case. The second section will analytically compare the resulting arrangement of governance instruments and assess the degree of their convergence towards the "global model". The last section will try to explain the developments employing the "glonacal agency heuristic" proposed by Marginson and Rhoades (2002) as a structuring device.

9.1 How has the governance of higher education systems changed between 1991-2015?[76]

9.1.1 Common challenges and similar answers

HEIs gain in autonomy, rectors gain in Power

[76] Parts of the results were published in: *Bischof (2018): Effects of the Bologna Process on quality assurance regimes in the post-Soviet space: Isomorphism and path dependencies in Moldova, Russia, and Kazakhstan.*

The Soviet Model of internal governance of HEIs had been characterized by a mixture of strong hierarchical control and power in the hands of university leadership, which had bene curbed only by the strong centralization and standardization of structures, processes, salaries, and quality assurance by the state. Rectors and first vice-rectors (a position always occupied by a representative of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) had far reaching powers over their institution. When the Soviet Union ceased to exist, universities were suddenly operating in a regulatory vacuum which affected internal governance in a fundamental way.

Since the internal power relation otherwise stayed the same, yet HEIs suddenly had much greater freedom of action and less state planning to implement, rectors significantly gained in power and influence within their HEIs. In both public and private HEIs, the rector was the final authority regarding strategy, personnel and financial questions, exerted considerable control over academic (scientific) councils which were often (but not always) relegated to formal "rubber stamp" bodies or as advisory bodies to the rector. The need to find new sources of funding to make up for the declining state support gave outsize influence to those individuals who could successfully do so. While in some case there were successful faculties, often, crucial resources were controlled by the rector. The fact that rectors were elected by academic councils in Russia, did not fundamentally change this power imbalance, as the voting individuals depended on rectors' goodwill in other areas. Newly founded private HEIs began operating in a legal vacuum and established their own internal governance structures, often mirroring state HEIs.

Re-introduction of external quality assurance mechanisms

In the entire post-Soviet space, the 1990ies were a period of re-establishing state institutions and a basic framework of standards and quality assurance for the higher education system. During the early post-Soviet regulatory vacuum, there were no formal quality assurance procedures. With the introduction of private HEIs and the right for all HEIs to charge tuition fees, the number of public and private HEIs quickly mushroomed, often to the detriment of their quality.

In order to assure the basic quality of more autonomous HEIs, all three case countries initially followed a similar approach of quality assurance. New versions of the Soviet-era curricular standards were developed, which defined common contents and structures for study programs of a specific discipline. The second common element in the 1990ies was a system of State *licensing*, *attestation*, and *accreditation* to control and certify compliance with these standards by HEIs. Under the new system, licensing verified whether an HEI had sufficient *resources* (premises, equipment, information and library resources, or teaching staff) to carry out educational activities. Attaining a license meant that HEIs were authorized to deliver instruction and could enjoy certain tax benefits. Attestation consisted of verifying that graduates' *performance* corresponded to the State Educational Standards (SES). Lastly, accreditation granted the accredited institution the right to award nationally recognized state diplomas and to participate in state budget funding and exempted its male students from obligatory military service.

The legislative vacuum or practice of ad-hoc ministerial decisions on licensing and accreditation lasted for different periods of time in different countries. Russia was the first country to develop a new version of state standards and a new system of external quality assurance, since it was able to draw upon a large reservoir of specialists from the previous institutions, whereas Kazakhstan and certainly Moldova had belonged to the periphery of the Soviet higher education system and thus had to first solve the task of creating state institutions.

While all countries established a peer-based system of external quality assurance, during the 1990ies, Russia granted its HEIs the largest degree of independence while Kazakhstan and Moldova pursued a much closer control. In Russia, decisions were taken by an Accreditation Board composed of heads of HEIs, and representatives of associations of HEIs and sectoral ministries (Chistokhvalov, 2007). The quality assurance agency was located in Yoshkar-Ola, 1000km away from Moscow, giving it a far greater degree of factual autonomy. In Moldova, in contrast, the first QAA (CNEAA) was composed almost exclusively of representatives from ministries and the Academy of Sciences, while decisions on accreditation or non-accreditation still required confirmation by the government. In Kazakhstan, the Committee for Supervision and Attestation in Education and Science was a direct subordinate part of the MoES.

Introduction of centralized testing and consolidation of higher education system

After a process of consolidation of their statehood and economic survival, in all three countries, governments began reasserting themselves as actors in their higher education systems around the turn of the millennium. By the end of the 1990ies, all three countries had developed a system of standards and external quality assurance. In all three countries, one problem was clearly showing: Since Soviet times, HEIs had had the right to select their own students. What had changed, however, was that the government no longer regulated the number of students an HEI could accept on a tuition basis, which had led to a massive expansion of for-tuition HE and an erosion of entrance requirements and quality standards within cash-strapped HEIs.

During the first half of the 2000ies, Russia, Moldova, and Kazakhstan all conducted state interventions to eradicate low-quality HEIs and branches of HEIs. This included state inspections and the withdrawal of licenses, restrictions on the operation of branch campuses and the introduction of centralized testing. First experiments with a centralized exam had begun as early as 1993 in Moldova but began in earnest in Kazakhstan[77] with the introduction of the "*complex test*" and the simultaneous introduction of the Kazakh 'money-follows-students' system of study grants in 1999. In Russia, the '*Unified Entry Exam*' was rolled out to the whole country between 2001 and 2009. In Moldova, the centralized *bacalareat* exam became compulsory for Lyceums in 2006 although the closing of various loopholes in the system

[77] Allegedly following a visit by a Kazakh delegation to the Russian Ministry of Education where the Russian plans were discussed.

was finalized only in 2014. Kazakhstan took centralized one step further by applying it to university students themselves, when, in 2003, it introduced the '*Comprehensive National Mid-Term Test*' to be conducted at all HEIs after the second year of studies on the contents of the compulsory subjects foreseen by the state standards. Students who failed the test were not be allowed to continue their studies to the third year (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

Slowly growing operational autonomy

During the early 1990ies, governments everywhere restricted academic autonomy through state standards for study programs and personnel autonomy through the introduction of qualification requirements and the control of academic titles and degrees, while leaving financial, and organizational autonomy relatively high. Since the early 2000s, governments increasingly gave HEIs more academic autonomy and reduced the degree of prescriptiveness of state standards. Step by step, governments in all countries also widened the operational autonomy of HEIs in terms of setting salaries, employment contracts, building administration and internal incentive systems.

In Kazakhstan, the vehicle for greater autonomy was privatization. In the early 2000ies, a number of state HEIs were semi-privatized and transformed into joint-stake companies, thus enjoying the same regulatory freedoms and the internal governance of private HEIs, such as board of directors appointing and overseeing the rector. Indeed, the State Strategy for Educational Development 2016-2020 foresees transforming all state HEIs into not-for profit companies.

Experiments with stakeholder governance

Since the mid-2000s, countries began to experiment with the creation of boards of trustees and boards of overseers. These were introduced in autonomous HEIs in Russia in 2006, in state HEIs in Kazakhstan in 2007 and 2010 and in Moldova in the form of *'strategic development councils*' in 2013. However, in all countries, the boards did not grow into real governing bodies, in part due to legal and cultural contradictions between the complete responsibility of rectors to the ministries of education and a lack of formal powers and responsibilities of the boards. In 2016, Kazakhstan began experimenting with involving boards in the nomination of rectors for state HEIs. At the time of writing, however, in all countries the final decision on the nomination of rectors remained with the government.

9.1.2 Diverging paths

Diverging responses to the European model of Quality Assurance

The 2000ies mark the beginning of the different paths the three countries took in their approach to governing their HE systems. Among other areas, this becomes visible in the area of quality assurance and the alignment to the European Higher Education Area. The 'European Model' of quality assurance, as formulated in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) stresses HEIs' primary responsibility for quality and calls on them to develop their own internal quality assurance systems

(IQA). External quality assurance (EQA) is to be conducted by independent quality assurance agencies on the basis of peer-based external reviews involving internal as well as external stakeholders.

In 2003, Russia joined the Bologna Process. Moldova and Kazakhstan started their efforts to join around the same time. Under the influence of this "European model", Russia merged attestation and accreditation into a single procedure. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) began organizing competitions for the best quality management systems within universities (Forrat, 2012a). A '*Coordination Council on Quality Provision*' was established which issued recommendations on internal quality management systems (Motova, 2015) and the effectiveness of internal quality management systems became one of the indicators for accreditation (Forrat, 2012a). A new generation of educational standards granted HEIs greater freedom to define the contents of their own study programs. During the period between 2002/2003 and 2009, related to Russia's ascension to the Bologna Process, proposals within the MoES were continuously being discussed that independent accreditation agencies should be certified by the state and their accreditation be recognized as equivalent to state accreditation. An incorporated '*guild of experts'* received support from the state oversight body for education *Rosobrnadzor* to conduct trainings for reviewers and independent QAAs were given signals that they might be recognized by the state replacing state accreditation.

Just as Russia was beginning to reform its system of quality assurance based on European and international models, in Moldova the communist party came into power, and the new minister Gheorghe Sima abolished Moldova's Quality Assurance Agency CNEAA, which had just started to conduct its first accreditations. All of its functions were transferred back to the Ministry of Education and the entire staff was replaced. Nevertheless, Moldova's ascension to the Bologna Process did create a situation of "coercive isomorphism" insofar as the ESG provided a strong model of what kind of quality assurance system would have to be developed in order to become part of the European Higher Education Area (Toderaş, 2012b). This required changes to a number of laws, structural reforms in higher education, a new nomenclature of study programs and a number of other changes. Significant resources and support were made available by donors (primarily by the European Union) to support policy convergence in Moldova. In 2006, trying to adapt to the ESG and responding to a certain pressure from the Council of Europe and the European Commission, to separate the MoE from evaluation, authorization and accreditation of HEIs, the Moldovan government decided to close the department for quality assurance within the MoE and to transfer its responsibilities first to a newly created Agency for Assessment and Evaluation in 2006 and to a new Quality Assurance Agency in 2008. While the first never came to occupy itself with higher education, the second never was founded and the country stayed without a procedure for accreditation until 2015.

Kazakhstan had, by 2003, put in place a heavily regulated quality assurance system resting on detailed standards and top-down control. At the same time, a reorientation to global and European practices was

taking place among the country's leadership. The *State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005-2010* (SPED 2005-2010) outlined an ambitious reform program to adapt Kazakhstan's education system to what were perceived as international best practices[78] regarding the structure and governance of higher education. The SPED structured the existing instruments of quality assurance (licensing, state attestation, the UNT and intermediate state control) and called for the introduction of independent accreditation and internal quality management systems to implement the principles of the Bologna declaration (Kalanova, S. & Omirbayev, 2009). A *National Accreditation Center* was founded under the MoES which developed a new methodology for accreditation and in 2007, accreditation was introduced to the law on education as a voluntary procedure. The following *State Program of Education Development* (SPED 2011-2020) called for independent accreditation to replace state accreditation and attestation by non-commercial, non-government, internationally recognized quality assurance agencies. The 2011 law dissolved the *National Accreditation Center* and created powerful incentives for HEIs to undergo independent accreditation (Sagintayeva, A. et al., 2014): HEIs that passed institutional and program accreditation in recognized accreditation agencies would be exempt from state attestation for the period of accreditation. More significantly, only accredited HEIs would be allowed to enroll state-funded students.

New funding models

A key change in the incentive structure for HEIs in almost all post-Soviet countries, was the introduction of dual-track financing in the early 1990ies. This meant that HEIs would receive a share of their income from the State as compensation for the costs of educating state-funded students. In addition, they could enroll students on a self-funding basis. This allowed countries to maintain a relatively broad access to higher education even in the face of shrinking tax revenues and budgets.

Both Kazakhstan and Russia began using state-funding as a steering instrument in the late 1990ies. In order to create an incentive for HEIs to invest in the quality of their higher education offer, Kazakhstan switched from pre-established budgets per HEI to a money-follows-students system of study grants in 1999. This represented possibly one of the strongest market mechanisms in HE funding in the post-Soviet space, as state-funding was now effectively distributed according to the same criterion as funding from tuition fees: Student-choice of where to study. The attractiveness of an HEI to students thus became one of the most determining factor for the competitiveness and even survival of Kazakh HEIs[79].

[78] Following, in essence, the anglocentric OECD line

[79] An exception to this pattern is only Nazarbayev University which receives a substantial share of the overall higher education budget and provides scholarships for all of the students it admits. National universities, which receive more state-funding per student also have an advantage in this competition, as they enjoy a better reputation among students.

Russia implemented as similar system in 2002 with the introduction of the money-follows-the-best-students *GIFO* system. While a similar, Russian-inspired system was swiftly implemented in Kazakhstan, in Russia itself, the model encountered heavy resistance from the strong rectors' union and regional politicians who feared (in most cases correctly) that their universities would lose income as state-funded students would increasingly coalesce in the most reputable HEIs. The experiment, which ultimately never extended beyond a few regions, was finally abandoned in 2005. Nevertheless, the experience created a blueprint for the design of a similar funding model with greater government control in 2013 (see below). Plans to introduce a similar system in Moldova find themselves in different government strategies but have not yet materialized.

The end of the 2000ies clearly marks diverging developments in the governance of higher education in the three case countries:

9.1.3 Two-track state steering system in Russia

In **Russia**, the movement towards a governance system more independent of direct government intervention never gained sufficient government support to overcome the resistance within the state bureaucracy and parts of the higher education establishment. In 2009, adapting to the ESG ceased to be a relevant consideration altogether, as the Russian government re-centralized decision-making and strengthened its interventive and steering capabilities through an array of steering instruments. The framework which successively emerged since 2004 – and picked up pace significantly after 2012 – was guided by the idea that public resources in HE should be concentrated on so-called "pivot points" (*tochki rosta*), a smaller number of high-quality HEIs while the overall number of HEIs should be radically reduced. This new system rested on support and incentives through a redistribution of funding on the one hand, stricter state monitoring of performance indicators, state inspections, closures and mergers of HEIs on the other, flanked bz a redistribution of public funding from the weaker HEIs to the stronger ones.

The first pillar consisted of increased support for leading universities. Since 2005, a series of support programs were launched to establish *Federal Universities* (in 2005/2006), *National Research Universities* (in 2008), world-class research universities (*"5-100" project*[80] in 2012) and "*flagship universities"* (in 2016). Participants were chosen in an open competition[81] and were allocated considerable additional funding. This came at the price of losing the right to elect their own rectors, who were henceforth appointed by the government (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Participating HEIs also had to submit to a

[80] The designation "5-100" refers to the program's goal of at least five Russian universities being represented among the top one hundred in global university rankings by 2020.
[81] Except for the Federal universities

regime of regular evaluation of their implementation progress towards their HEI's development program. HEIs which do not meet their own goals can be expelled from the program, although so far none ever was.

The second pillar of the strategy rested on tighter control and intervention by the state. In 2009, by decision of the new head of Rosobrnadzor, a staff reshuffle took place at the National Accreditation Agency (*Rosakkredagenstvo*) and almost all of the staff left due to disagreements over the role and functioning of the agency. The centralization was completed when the seat of Rosakkredagenstvo was moved from Yoshkar-Ola to Moscow in 2011 where the agency shared offices in the same building with Rosobrnadzor. At the same time, Rosobrnadzor received the right to conduct unannounced inspections of HEIs at any time as well as the power to revoke a license of a university, which earlier could have been done only by court decision. This change converted the system of licensing and accreditation from a fairly bureaucratic, yet predictable process into a powerful instrument of state steering and control in the hands of Rosobnadzor. Since Rosobnadzor can revoke any license or accreditation decision until the HEIs in question successfully challenges this decision in court, it may not enroll new students. Due to the possible length of the legal procedure, this may doom an HEI regardless of the appeal's outcome. With the ground thus laid, the so-called '*effectiveness monitoring*' (*monitoring effektivnosti*) was launched in 2012 with the purpose was to identify HEIs with low performance based on centrally collected indicator data[82] (Froumin, I. et al., 2014). HEIs which do not meet performance standards set by the MoES are labelled as 'ineffective' and subsequently investigated by Rosobrnadzor. If sufficient shortcomings are found, HEIs can be merged with other institutions, partially restructured or lose their license or accreditation altogether and have to close.

Finally, a third pillar can be seen in the new mechanism of allocation of state funding for HEIs that was introduced in 2013. HEIs which perform well on a set of state-defined performance indicators (similar to the ones used in the efficiency monitoring) are now getting preferential allocation of state-funded study places. This puts further pressure on weak HEIs and increases their risk of being investigated by Rosobrnadzor (*pillar two*). Since 2012, decisions by Rosobrnadzor have resulted in mergers and liquidations of a large number of HEIs and an even higher number of branches. In 2014 alone, Rosobrnadzor closed 357 HEIs and branches. In the first half of 2015, 151 Russian HEIs and branches had their license withdrawn, 34 lost their accreditation[83]. Independent accreditation continued to exist at the fringes of the system, but demand remained low and the agencies offering it have never come to play a significant role in the overall governance of the higher education system.

By granting greater operational autonomy and power to university leadership, the state has increasingly withdrawn from micro-managing internal affairs of universities in Russia, although it reserves the right

[82] indicators relate to quality of student intake, teaching effectiveness, research, faculty, infrastructure, finance, labor market outcomes of graduates, and internationalization
[83] https://www.ucheba.ru/article/1041

to intervene at any moment. Academics have considerably lost in influence in university management and the introduction of effective contracts has given the university management the power to financially reward or sanction certain activities, while collegial professorial authority was reduced to purely academic matters.

The primary mission of the university in the new model is satisfying state socioeconomic objectives, but the instruments by which the state is hoping to achieve these goals is through creating and employing market-mechanisms under the control of the state. The state uses a manpower planning system design coupled with incentives for competition for implementation of these goals. The involvement of economic and employer stakeholders has grown both on the central governmental level with the creation of the Council on State Standards, and stakeholder inclusion in various ministerial and presidential advisory committees and into advisory and governing boards within HEIs. In general, boards in their majority still play a rather limited role of mostly advising and marketing for HEIs. Both for committees and universities, the state plays a large role in appointing members to these boards.

The dominating source of university funding is the state budget followed by tuition fees. State funding is allocated by a competitive distribution state-funded study places based on state-controlled criteria. HEIs compete for students for state-funded places and for self-funded studies. The total size of this contingent is determined (aside from demography) by the threshold the state determines for the centralized university entrance examination. For the small top-tier segment of universities, significant additional funding from government-programs *(Research University program, 5-100 program, flagship university program*) is allocated on a competitive basis, if only (so far) exclusively to state HEIs. Strategic investments typically follow state-defined development priorities but are allocated in a competitive manner based on HEI's development plans and strategies. To a smaller degree, investments are also undertaken by university management and faculties, into spin-off companies, and technology centers, although as a rule without state support.

In many ways features of the Russian approach to HE governance correspond to what by Dobbins et al. (2011) described as the market-oriented model. The key difference, however, is that most of these market mechanisms are created and controlled by the state.

9.1.4 Marketization and expanding state-overseen stakeholder governance in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has come to pursue a model of development, importing, imitating and re-creating Western institutions in the Kazakh context by an authoritarian State.

Regarding quality assurance, the move from state attestation to independent accreditation represented, for the first time since independence, a clear transfer powers of powers from the MoES to bodies not under its direct control. It went even further than most EU-countries, as it recognized national reviews as well accreditations conducted by international agencies, as one of the first countries in the EHEA to

do so, while licensing, intermediate testing and licensing controls remained in place as instruments of control within the purview of the MoES. As part of granting increased autonomy to HEIs, in 2011, the State Educational Standards for each study program were abolished and replaced by more general framework state standards for the Bachelor, Master's and PhD level which defined the generic basic structure of study programs of each level. As by 2017, HEIs may define up to 55% of study program contents themselves (70% in the case of national research universities).

The role of Western policy concepts is visible in the strong involvement of the OECD in evaluating and advising higher education policy, in particular in the development of the influential state programs for education development (SPED). The "Washington consensus"[84] of the 1990s is arguably also visible in the policy of privatizations of state universities taking place in 2001, which is unique for the post-Soviet space.

The strong presence of Anglo-Saxon models is also visible in the foundation of Western-type institutions: The establishment of KIMEP, a private university with a large proportion of Western-educated academic staff in the early 1990s, the foundation of British-Kazakh Technical University in 1997, and the creation of Nazarbayev University in Astana in 2006 are all examples of this approach of creating elite HEIs with western curricula and English as their working language. Especially Nazarbayev University (NU) was explicitly created as a model and testing ground for the internal governance for other Kazakh universities.

A good example of the process of policy transfer happening in Kazakhstan was the introduction of governance boards in state HEIs. Greater stakeholder involvement in university governance had been recommended in virtually all recommendations by the OECD and the World Bank. A particular challenge for involving autonomous stakeholder associations was that, as a rule, they did not exist in country and needed to be created top-down first, before they could be involved in stakeholder governance[85]. Nevertheless, the creation of governing boards had become state policy in the State Program of education development 2005-2010 and renewed for the SPED 2011-2020. The first introduction of boards of trustees in 2007 had been seen as largely ineffectual, as the board bylaws were created by HEIs themselves which allowed them merely to suggest, discuss, and advise the rector, thus withholding any real formal authority, making them sounding boards and forums for consultation with employers and the regional community rather than true governing boards. In 2012, the government reacted to this state of affairs and introduced "boards of overseers" with clearly stated responsibilities guaranteed under the Law on State Assets that regulates public universities. The entire process was advised by a team of consultants

[84] The Washington Consensus is a commonly-used term in development studies for the set of 10 economic policy prescriptions considered to constitute the "standard" reform package promoted for crisis-wracked developing countries by Washington, D.C.–based institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the US Treasury Department. Among its recommendations, privatization of state enterprises and deregulation were deemed particularly important in post-Soviet "transition" countries.

[85] As was the case of the business association '*Atameken*', which was founded by presidential order.

of Nazarbayev University and Pennsylvania University. Since 2016, their powers were expanded to vetting and proposing candidates for rector, approving budgets; defining strategy and admissions criteria, creating faculty hiring policies, and even set the senior leadership team's salaries (Bilyalov, 2016). While the final decision on rector appointments is still taken by a government committee, a pattern of tentative experimentation towards adopting Western-inspired reforms of internal governance is clearly visible.

The import of international (western) models of higher education institutions has clearly shaped Kazakhstan's higher education policy. It is also clear, however, that the government has been delegating control in a cautious fashion, often keeping final decision-making within its area of competence.

9.1.5 Imitation of "European" institutions in Moldova

The development of the governance of the Moldovan higher education system can be read as a story in which reforms to establish a more decentralized approach to system governance were tried – and failed – again and again, due to a lack of capacity in the ministerial bureaucracy, erratic policy shifts, and deep-seated mutual distrust between actors. It can also, however, be read as a story of how a small number of individuals within HEIs and the Ministry of Education have labored tirelessly to keep the higher education system running, protect it from abrupt policy turns brought about by shifting governments and improve it using any means (mostly from European funds) available to them to become part of the European Higher Education space.

Out of all three country cases, the governance of the Moldovan higher education system has arguably changed the least. Moldova took the longest to establish an operational system of external quality assurance, which only in 1999 began to curtail the greatest excesses of the lack of systematic oversight had created. After the re-centralization of control within the MoE and the Presidential administration in 2002, and the twice-failed foundation of new, autonomous quality assurance agencies, a new functional QAA appeared only in 2015. During this time, the Ministry of Education tried to maintain order and structure in the higher education system, using its leverage in the allocation of state-funded study places, the licensing of HEIs, authorization of study programs, and its control over state educational standards.

From 2009 onwards, policy in higher education clearly began to orient itself at the European Higher Education Area as a model. The revision of the educational code, which finally entered force in 2014 contains a number of governance reforms based on European models, such as the quality assurance framework, the expansion of university financial autonomy, and the introduction of strategic advisory boards. It is notable that where reform initiatives were launched, they were often accompanied by financial support from international donors, first among them the European Union which funded notable TEMPUS projects which contributed to reform in quality assurance (*QUAEM*), and university financial autonomy and governance (*ATHENA, EUniAM*).

In most aspects of higher education governance, however, the reforms have stopped short of fundamentally changing the distribution of power within the higher education system: Instead of becoming governing boards, university development councils became advisory bodies with unclear powers over rectors. University autonomy was extended in the area of financial autonomy of HEIs but the decisions about state-funded study places (the most important income of HEIs) remained under the full discretion of the Ministry of Education. Maybe the most significant changes were made in the area of quality assurance. The introduction of compulsory centralized testing and the closing of loopholes for non-eligible students effectively drained a corruption-prone and low-quality sector of the HE system of its income. Curricular autonomy within the state educational standards did grow and a new independent quality assurance agency was founded. At the time of writing, however, it was still too early to see which degree of independence the agency would be able to exert and whether its resource base would allow it to be operationally independent, and whether it would be able to withstand pressure from the political elites. At the time of writing, due to the very low salaries paid, most staff still had second jobs at universities, potentially compromising their independence.

9.2 Is there a convergence towards a "post-Soviet" or global model of governance of higher education systems?

Convergence of models of governance can be studied under different aspects. I will begin to explore this topic by studying to what degree the instruments of governance used by case countries correspond to the propagated "global model" of university governance (Baker & Lenhardt, 2008) and whether there have been trends towards or away from this model.

9.2.1 Quality Assurance

The basic approach to quality assurance in all case countries is similar in that study programs contents are regulated by *State Educational Standards* which define which study programs can be offered, their basic structure, compulsory contents and electives. Countries differ by the degree of detail that is prescribed but there is a trend towards greater academic autonomy for individual HEIs in this area.

Basic requirements for HEIs to operate or to offer specific study programs are defined in *licensing and accreditation standards*. Compliance with these standards is controlled through some form of *state licensing or authorization procedure, post-licensing controls and accreditation*. The latter is conducted either by a single state-dependent agency (in Russia), a single semi-independent agencies (Moldova) or multiple independent agencies which have been accredited to operate by the state (in Kazakhstan).

It has become clear that the Bologna process and the ESG principle of independent external accreditation have exerted a considerable isomorphic influence on quality assurance in all three post-Soviet countries under analysis. On the one hand, in all countries, Quality Assurance Agencies were established by the government or on the initiative of individuals, which operate according to the ESG and have joined the

European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and are registered (or plan to be) in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) [86].

On the other hand, the specific practices in quality assurance in the three countries illustrate clearly diverging trajectories:

In **Russia**, during the 2000ies, there was a clear openness to adopting a "European" model of quality assurance. While this idea enjoyed some support by actors within the MoES and Rosobrnadzor, it was never sufficient to overcome the resistance within the top echelons of the MoES, the state bureaucracy and parts of the higher education establishment. In 2009, adapting to the ESG ceased to be a relevant consideration altogether, as Russia developed its own governance model based on the three pillars of financial support, financial redistribution and administrative intervention. Independent QAAs continues to exist at the fringes of the system, but demand remains low and the agencies offering it have never come to play a significant role in the overall governance of the higher education system.

In contrast, **Kazakhstan**, even though joining the Bologna Process much later than the other two countries, has become a type of "model student" of the Bologna Communiqués on QA. Not only did the country introduce independent accreditation, but it has also allowed international QAAs to operate on par with national agencies. Looking at the national factors underlying this apparent policy convergence however, three stand out: Firstly, Kazakhstan did not have a strong entrenched higher education lobby rejecting reform that conflicted with past ideals. Secondly, a number of key experts in the MoES and the presidential administration, have lobbied for reform on accreditation and have succeeded to include it in the presidential development programs. Lastly, and most importantly, the president of the country has acted as a decisive proponent of reform (not only) in the sphere of higher education, pushing for the adoption of international practices, inviting international organizations and pursuing membership in international bodies from the Bologna Process to the OECD. Presidential support for the state strategies for education development were undoubtedly a key factor in overcoming (or overruling) resistance and skepticism in the ministerial bureaucracy. This factor sets Kazakhstan apart also from other Central Asian countries, where "traveling policies" promoted by international organizations have increasingly clashed with the desire of policy-makers to maintain Soviet education legacies (Silova, 2011c).

In **Moldova**, the ascension to the Bologna Process did create a situation of "coercive isomorphism" insofar as the ESG provided a strong model of what kind of quality assurance system would have be developed in order to become part of the European Higher Education Area (Toderaş, 2012b). Significant resources and support were made available, primarily by the European Union to support policy convergence in Moldova. On the other hand, the often-changing political landscape in the country, political inter-dependencies of key actors, vested interests of the academic oligarchy, corruption in the HE system

[86] The Moldovan QAA ANACIP is an associated member of ENQA. The 2014 code of education foresees full membership and registration in EQAR.

and the overall economic and financial difficulties of HEIs acted as powerful forces of inertia and resistance to any systemic change in quality assurance as in the overall governance of higher education (Ciurea et al., 2012). In 2014, the new code of education established ANACIP as a new independent quality assurance agency. To what degree the new QAA will be indeed be independent and be successful in the long run, remains to be seen.

9.2.2 Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

The "global model" of university governance propagates a strong rectoral/presidential decision-making power to HE leadership, endowed with decision-making powers, in particular the power to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff, which is appointed and controlled by an influential governing board representing the most important stakeholders of the institution.

During the 1990ies, Russia gave the most far-reaching autonomy to its HEIs, including the **election of rectors** by academic councils. In Moldova, HEIs formally received the same right, but any appointment of rectors or of vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans, directors of study services, and chairpersons required ministry approval, giving it a strong degree of control over appointments. In 2006, Russia, too, required rectors of state HEIs to be confirmed by the MoES. For autonomous institutions (AU), rectors were appointed by (state-controlled) boards and the rectors of MSU and SPBSU were directly appointed by the president. In Kazakhstan, the State never relinquished the power to appoint the HEI leadership.

The internal governance structures of HEIs changed notably little during the 1990ies and 2000ies. In all case countries, rectors remained the most powerful actors whose formal and informal power over their HEI and collegial governance organs such as academic councils grew as HEIs gained greater operational autonomy, especially through financial and staffing autonomy.

In all three countries, some form of **advisory or governing boards** were introduced during the 2010s, in all cases with reference to "international best practices" and with input from international organizations and consultants. Likewise, in all case countries, in their first iteration, these boards were to play an advising function, to support better linking HEIs with their local, business and societal stakeholders. Beyond this, the role that these boards play is ambiguous and still in flux. In Moldova, the rights of boards are potentially far-reaching and compass many areas of strategy, finance, and personnel, but their role vis-à-vis rectors and the MoE is unclear. In Russia, while the governing boards of autonomous institutions (AU) are involved in some respects concerning strategy and financial oversight of the HEI, the appointment of rectors is the exclusive responsibility of state. In Kazakhstan, governing boards coordinate the process of vetting and proposing candidates for rector while a government commission takes the final decision. In all cases, the state is willing to delegate some aspects of operational management and oversight to rectors and boards while retaining its ability to intervene at any time and take binding decisions.

A separate form of oversight appeared during from the mid-2000ies in Russia for those HEIs which participated in government programs (Federal Universities, National Research Universities, 5-100). These HEIs had to submit greater central oversight and accountability through evaluations of the implementation of their strategic development plans. A comparable approach to oversight appeared in Kazakhstan in the 2010s, where rectors began to be held accountable for strategy development and success in its implementation in reports and yearly meetings with a government commission. No comparable accountability mechanism appeared in Moldova, although HEIs are required to have strategic development plans as well.

Regarding **operational autonomy**, there is a clear trend towards greater freedom in the areas of organizational, financial autonomy, staffing, and academic autonomy, albeit in to very different degrees. Overall Russia and Kazakhstan grants most operational autonomy to its HEIs (respectively their leadership), albeit the top leadership is de-facto appointed by the State. In this context, it is important to note that since the foremost task of the rector during the Soviet Union was the implementation of state strategy, their decision-making powers had always been considerably greater than that of their western colleagues.

The most pronounced area of autonomy is **staffing autonomy**. Regulation in this area which is common to all three countries is the verification of titles and degrees by a form of Higher Attestation Commission – VAK (in RU: VAK – in MD: CNEA – in KZ: CCES). As long as HEIs meet formal qualification requirements, they may recruit and dismiss staff as they see fit and determine their remuneration. Through changes to the legal form of HEIs, HEIs in Russia and Kazakhstan have become more flexible in defining their own remuneration and incentive systems, such as through the performance-based "effective contracts" in Russia.

Organizational autonomy is most limited in state HEIs in Moldova where the MoE needs to confirm establishment, restructuring and suspension of faculties. In addition, the government ministry decides on the establishment, restructuring or liquidation of universities. Such decisions are prepared by the Ministry of Education, approved by the government and need the final promulgation of the President of the Republic. Until the new code of education in 2014, collaboration agreements with foreign universities and other organizations also required the permission of the Ministry of Education. In Russia and Kazakhstan, HEIs may decide more freely on organizational structures more freely, although the key governing bodies and powers of leadership functions are defined by the law.

9.2.3 Regulation of access

A common denominator of the post-Soviet higher education landscape has been the introduction of **centralized admission exams** (Drummond, T. W. & Gabrscek, 2014). These regulate the overall size of the eligible yearly study contingent, in other words, the size of the market for higher education. This

is certainly a major case of convergence across the post-Soviet space. The instrument of directly **establishing quotas for study places** is used less uniformly. While all countries provide a certain number of state-funded places, Moldova and Russia strictly regulate enrollment to tuition-based studies per study program, Russia tried to do so during the 1990ies and Kazakhstan does not centralize set a limit.

9.2.4 Financing

In the area of financing**,** there is a clear trend towards convergence of all case countries towards the "global model" propagating more competitive distribution of funding, a move towards global budgets and diversification of funding, although national path dependencies and particularities are clearly visible:

The trend towards **greater financial autonomy** is visible in all countries. Full lump-sum budgets for state HEIs have been implemented only in a small, mostly elite segment of Russian HEIs and in Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan. **Income-diversification** from tuition-fees and other sources plays a significant role in almost all countries of the post-Soviet Space since universal cost-sharing was introduced in the early 1990ies (and thus in fact much earlier than in most European countries). The **declining demographic trend** in all case countries put pressure on income from tuition which decreases its relative importance vis-à-vis state funding. **Competitive allocation of state funding** is increasing. Kazakhstan stands out as the most radical example with the introduction of its *money-follows-students* scheme in 1999, but Russia introduced its own competitive system in 2013. In addition, both countries also renewed their investment in higher education, particularly through **increased direct state funding for the elite tier** of research universities[87].

In Kazakhstan, private funding in the form of tuition has become the primary source of income for the majority of HEIs, while state funding is concentrated among leading HEIs which win most grant-carrying students. To a lesser degree, competitive allocation of state funding in Russia is likewise leading to a concentration in its elite universities. In Moldova, the system of allocating state funding remains unchanged and does not focus public expenditure on HE, although the intention to introduce a money-follows-student model of differentiated funding levels by discipline has been repeatedly stated. The money-follows-students model of financing is thus a strong model in all countries. The timing and degree of its implementation seems to corresponded to the degree of power of the government to overcome resistance of university rectors who were, in their majority, against it.

The individual country's differences notwithstanding, in no case where competitive distribution of funding, lump-sum budgets, financial autonomy, or more diversified funding were introduced, have there there been developments in the reverse direction.

[87] In Russia through its excellence initiatives, in Kazakhstan via the designation of National Universities and Nazarbayev University, the latter of which profits from substantial direct subsidies and full scholarships for all admitted students.

9.2.5 Conclusion: Is there a common model of governance?

After 25 years of transformation, the single Soviet model of higher education has clearly evolved into unique national systems, shaped by economic, cultural, and political forces, of national, regional and global nature. Judging exclusively by the evolution of *instruments* of governance employed in the various HE systems over the past 25 years, one cannot but note a development towards the "global model" of university governance (Baker & Lenhardt, 2008) in all three case countries. As the following table shows, many features of the systems of governance of the three studied countries correspond to the "global model" of higher education governance:

	„Global model"	Russia	Moldova	Kazakhstan
Relationship of HE and the State	*a shift away from ''state control'' model and towards ''state supervising''* *steering from the distance"* *shift in state influence from ex-ante to ex-post control, with the state focusing on outputs and performance indicators rather than managing inputs, increasing their demands on HEIs for accountability*	State is highly active in policy-setting. State supervising, steering from a distance and ex-post control is visible for top tier of HE system Strong state control and intervention for the lower tier	State is not very effective at policy-setting and enforcing State remains directly engaged in large number of HEI decisions State supervising, steering from a distance and ex-post control is not widespread; relegation of control visible in some areas (QA)	State remains highly active in policy-setting but is withdrawing from operational control
Quality Assurance	*External evaluation and control of performance by accreditation* *University and Subject Rankings create transparency for student choice of HEIs*	Study programs contents regulated by Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) External evaluation and control of performance by licensing &	Study programs contents regulated by National Qualification Framework and framework plan for study programs	Study programs and their contents are regulated by the educational standard, the state classifier, typical study plans, and qualification and licensing requirements

		accreditation and effectiveness monitoring Independent accreditation welcomed but optional National ranking of HEIs	External control of licensing requirements by MoE Accreditation of study programs by semi-independent QAA No national ranking (yet)	Compliance with standards is controlled through state licensing, post-licensing controls, and unscheduled controls Study programs are accredited by independent accreditation agencies rankings of HEIs operated by QAAs
Institutional Governance and Autonomy	*Greater decision-making power to HEI leadership; Greater power to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff* *Greater organizational autonomy, discretionary control over collective resources, more clearly defined boundaries to the environment, greater self-perception as an organization, hierarchies and internal management as well as 'rationality' (understood as having defined goals and measuring performance)* *Adopting models of corporate governance such as appointment of rectors and presidents by boards rather than through election*	Considerable power of HE leadership further expended Appointment by state-dominated governing boards or the President in AUs, de-facto appointment of rectors by MoES in others Power to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff with HEI leadership Advisory boards and state-dominated governance boards Power of HEI leadership to appoint, evaluate,	Considerable power of HE leadership since Soviet times Election of Rectors by Senate and Strategic Development Councils (unclear), confirmation by MoE Strategic Development Councils with unclearly defined powers Power of HEI leadership to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff	Considerable power of HE leadership since Soviet times Proposal of Rectors by boards of overseers and appointment by government commission Boards of overseers with power to approve budgets and collaborate in questions of strategy, admissions, hiring, and reimbursement Power of HEI leadership to appoint, evaluate, reimburse and dismiss academic staff below vice-rectors taking into account state qualification requirements

	Involvement of external stakeholders in university governance *Promotion of strategic planning and strategic management*	reimburse and dismiss academic staff		
Financing higher education	*decrease of itemized budgets and introduction of global budgets* *more competitive distribution of funding based on performance measures* *diversification of funding via tuition fees, funding from enterprises, regional authorities*	lump-sum budgets and financial autonomy for AU, line-item budgets for other state HEIs Competitive mechanism of allocating state-funded study places Competitive participation in government-programs (RU, 5-100, flagship universities) Competition for students to fill places Income-diversification from tuition-fees and other sources	Line-item budgets from state funding; financial autonomy for other sources of income Allocation of state funding via study places as well as number of tuition-funded places by government decision Competition for students to fill places Income-diversification from tuition-fees and other sources	Line-items prescribed for spending student grants, State funding via money-follows-students scheme. Competition for students to fill places Income-diversification and financial autonomy for tuition-fees and other types of income
Regulation of Access to HE	*Restricted through limited number of state-funded places* *some preferential admission criteria* *HEI admission exams*	Centralized testing with EGE – exception for winners of state olympiads	Centralized testing with Bacalaureat Number of fee-paying students strictly regulated, but mostly	Centralized testing with UNT and CT Number of fee-paying students not regulated

		Number of fee-paying students regulated	inconsequential due to demographic downturn	

Table 22: Comparison of governance systems in RU, MD & KZ and "global model" by 2015

The growth (albeit slow) of independent accreditation, the use of university rankings, greater institutional autonomy in organizational, staff, financial, academic matters (in the form of an empowered central HEI leadership) and the creation of governing boards all seem to point into the direction of greater convergence towards the "global model".

In other areas, the commonalties of higher education governance of the three case countries clearly diverge from the "global model": University autonomy in choosing and admitting students is very limited by state-controlled centralized examinations. Stakeholder governance, while introduced in all three case countries, does not play a decisive role in any, as the key decisions of strategic consequence, such as the selection and the appointment of rectors, are either directly made by the government or closely controlled by it.

It becomes obvious then, that – at least on the surface – the governance of higher education systems does indeed appear to become more similar and that a process of convergence seems to be taking place. It is similarly clear, however, that the reality of governance in place in the three case studies does not correspond to the hands-off, steering-from-a-distance approach that the global model propagates. A crucial difference to the 'global model' is that the dominating role of the state as the key actor has remained in place in all countries: In Russia, one cannot help but note how the state has employed *instruments* of New Public Management to *re-centralized* the HE system by establishing a differentiated steering model which applies incentives for the top tier of the HE sector and controls and sanctions for the lower tier. In Kazakhstan, the government is pursuing a modernization strategy based on OECD and World Bank recommendations, including their recommendations on stakeholder governance. While the elements of autonomy and stakeholder governance are slowly expanded (often, ironically, only via considerable intervention by the state), it is clear that the development of the national HE system is in great measure overseen and guided by the government. In Moldova, where state institutions are weak, the state acts as a controlling rather than a steering agent and generally distrusts HEIs to wield substantial autonomy. As a consequence, the instability of policy-making and executive priorities characteristic for the system do not lead to with greater HEIs independence from the state, but instead force HEI leaders to dedicate considerable resources to monitoring the political environment, maintaining good relations to all actors and defending their HEI's interests in an ever-changing policy-environment.

Universities all over the world devise diverse solutions in the face of global trends that may appear standard, but are never standardized in their effects, as they are adapted (Krücken et al., 2007). The same holds true for the studied higher education systems and their governance. It becomes visible that in the

face of the emergence of many new instruments of governance, the specific national governance arrangements persist and continue to matter. This pattern corresponds to what Gornitzka and Maassen (2000, 284) observed for the changes in governance in Western European countries:

> *"while the governmental rhetoric with respect to steering of higher education has changed to reflect in many ways a (super)market steering approach, the underlying institutions (rules, regulations, instruments) have not been adapted accordingly."*

This finding reflects a key tenet in higher education research that in higher education, change, if it happens at all, generally does so incrementally and by adding new structures as addition layers to what already exists, rather than replacing old structures completely (Clark, B. R., 1983; Musselin, 2005). Thelen and Mahoney (2010) envisage four types of institutional change (summarized in Jungblut & Vukasovic, 2013):

1. ***displacement****, that is, removal of old and introduction of new rules, expected in situations of weak veto possibilities and low level of discretion in interpretation and enforcement;*
2. ***layering****, that is, introduction of new rules on top of the old ones, expected in situations in which there are strong veto possibilities but low levels of discretion in interpretation and enforcement;*
3. ***drift****, which refers to the situation in which the formal rules remain the same, but the institutional environment is changed, expected when there is a high level of discretion and strong veto possibilities; and*
4. ***conversion****, which implies that rules remain formally the same but their interpretation and application by the relevant actors is different, occurring where there is a high level of discretion and weak veto possibilities.*

Processes of *layering* are most clearly visible in the case of the three post-Soviet country cases with *displacement* only in some isolated instances (e.g. the replacement of state attestation by accreditation in Kazakhstan). Indeed, the dominating control role of the state has remained in place in all countries. This is strongly reinforced by national-level institutions and mental models which affirm hierarchy as the legitimate principle in governance, accompanied by a widespread lack of trust between actors in the system. In all case countries, the mutual expectation of state and HEIs alike remains that the state should be steering the higher education sector, which it does (Russia and Kazakhstan) or attempts to do (Moldova). Most clearly, the adoption of instruments of new public management does in no way represent a "retreat of the state" (Strange 1996). While the elements of autonomy and stakeholder governance are slowly expanded, even this very process is in great measure overseen and steered by the state.

The last chapter will aim to explain these differences, considering actors on different levels as well as institutional factors of the higher education systems that are shaping development paths or are locking them into place.

9.3 The interplay of national, regional and global factors on the development of the governance of higher education

As has been shown above, the "global model" of higher education governance has clearly exerted isomorphic pressure on all post-Soviet countries, promoted by international organizations like the World Bank, the OECD, and – since the 2000s – through the Bologna Process. As all three case countries are members of the European Higher Education Area and are likewise exposed to the "global model", why has the governance of the higher education systems in the three case countries taken such different paths?

Marginson and Rhoades (2002) propose to analyze isomorphic pressures and path dependencies on the *global*, the *national* and the *local* dimension. In order to retrace the complex reciprocal interactions of actors across levels and domains, they propose to study the "*agencies*," (polities, entities or organizations) influencing developments, their geographical and functional *spheres* of influence and the relative *strength of influences.* In their model, the effects of these influences depend primarily on the degree of the (historical) embeddedness of the structures upon which they are exerting influence (*layers and conditions).* The interaction of agencies of different levels, their respective strength, spheres of influence and the resilience of locally embedded structures can then help to explain how ideas and concepts travel and get transformed as they are implemented in different contexts.

Bearing in mind the limitations of such an explanatory approach (see chapter 3.2.1), we will begin to explore this final aspect of the changes of governance in the following chapter.

9.3.1 Global and European forces

As is not surprising for global agencies and discourses, the concrete transmission vectors of ideas are often not clearly retraceable. Policy changes can be both promoted by international organizations as well as they can be perceived by policy-makers as an adequate response to similar goals and challenges. Likewise, the *rhetorics* of a specific policy change can be adopted without any change in actual practice. Nevertheless, influences are visible in the three case countries.

9.3.1.1 Direct influence via international organizations

The **direct influence of international organizations** such as the World Bank, the OECD, or private foundations (e.g. the Open Society Foundation) differs greatly between countries. Since 1991, these organizations financed projects and advised policy reform efforts in all three case countries, as did various Western governments and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and, increasingly, the European Commission.

In **Russia**, during the 1990ies, international donors such as the Soros Foundation and the World Bank played a significant role in investment especially into Russian higher education, such as advising with curricular reform. The government had welcomed their involvement, against repeated attempts by Duma

deputies to ban them (Adrian et al., 2000). Direct pressure by the IMF and the World Bank related to their investments cannot be evidenced. Financial aid from these organizations was limited and its conditionality, if present at all, was never enforced. In the 2000s, the activities of the World Bank and the OECD on higher education decreased in Russia, but greatly increased in **Kazakhstan** through projects and consulting work, which was greatly promoted by the government, as evidenced by the Worldbank/OECD evaluations of 2007 and 2017, which fed quite directly into the state programs for educational development. Likewise, such as in the area of quality assurance, key officials within the MoES had gained exposure to Western models of quality assurance through study visits and contributed these experiences to the drafting of the SPED (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). In **Moldova** international agencies such as the World Bank & OECD were much less active in higher education than in the other two countries.

9.3.1.2 Indirect influence of Anglo-Saxon institutions

With or without direct influence of international organizations on governance reforms in Russia, **neoliberal *ideas*** such as those promoted by those organizations during the 1990ies began to heavily influence policy in the field of higher education in all case countries. The policies universally adopted across the post-Soviet space – cost-sharing between private households and the state in education financing, greater operational and financial autonomy of HEIs, the introduction of private HE, standard-based accreditation for private and state HEIs alike – corresponded well to the "Washington Consensus" of the 1990ies.

Regarding quality assurance, influential individuals from all three countries all traveled to the United States and Europe to study QA practices. Beyond these commonalities, the transmission vectors for these ideas into the national HE systems differ considerably between countries:

In **Russia**, the *Centre for Strategic Research* and the *Higher School of Economics* (HSE) can be identified as two such institutional vectors. HSE's founding rector, Yaroslav Kuzminov, had been a member of the Council of the Center for Strategic Research and, together with Education Minister Vladimir Filippov, he headed the development of the section on "*Modernization of Education*" of the Gref Program. He was also the co-leader of the expert group on "Labor market, professional education, migration policy" of the "*Strategy for Socio-Economic Development of Russia until 2020"* ("Strategy 2020"). HSE united among its staff many prominent authors and contributors of market-liberal reforms such as the EGE, the GIFO financing mechanism, and the targeted investment programs[88]. Via the Gref Program in 2000, a number of liberal reforms were introduced into the governance of the Russian HE system, such as competitive financing based on performance and reduce corruption in university admission through

[88] Since 2012, HSE founded the Institute of Education whose founding director, Isak Froumin, had been Lead Education Specialist at the Moscow Office of the World Bank since 1999 and had acted as an advisor to ministers Filippov, Fursenko, and Livanov. World Bank experts such as Jamil Salmi closely cooperated with HSE and advised the Russian government.

the introduction of a centralized national admission exam. This policy had been supported with expertise by the World Bank (which supported similar models in many post-soviet countries) although Russia did not seek foreign donor support for the implementation of their new selection regimes (Drummond, T. W. & Gabrscek, 2014). Ministers of education and science Fursenko and Livanov continued to draw upon these policy ideas in promoting competition in the public sector, greater 'hands-on professional management', combined with more explicit standards and measures of performance and output controls and private-sector styles of management, such as governing boards. The growing importance of international rankings, of targeted programs drew inspiration from policy-initiatives abroad (such as the German excellence initiative). This view seems to be widely shared among senior ministry officials. As one of them describes:

> *"I think [the origins of the policy ideas of Fursenko] go back to the generic World Bank blueprints which got domesticated, this idea of Flagship universities had a number of iterations from the first program, the 'innovative universities', up to '5-100'. The basic idea is that a) we are going to distribute funds competitively, and b) that extra money comes into the center, we will try to concentrate it among the strongest"* (Interview RU No. 16, 2017)

Therefore, for Russia, even though the involvement of international organizations themselves has been very limited after the 1990es, the policy ideas promoted by them have no doubt shaped Russian higher education policy indirectly.

Kazakhstan

Among the three countries studies, the government of Kazakhstan is possibly most eager to adopt what is understood locally as international and European "best practices". Almost all interviewees related the changes to a desire to be "modern", to be recognized in the wider and especially the western world. The following quote is fairly representative and illustrates this perception among many stakeholders of the inevitability of changes to this end:

> *"The times dictate that we must follow the worldwide trends in education if we want our diplomas to be recognized. We need to all go into the same direction and follow the same requirements" (Interview KZ No. 20, 2017)*

Several transmission vectors can be identified. Among them *international universities*, *policy consultants*, and *graduates of the Bolashak scholarship program* stand out. Private universities such as KIMEP (founded in 1992 by decree of Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of the Republic of Kazakhstan) or the Kazakh-British Technical university (founded in 2001) and Nazarbayev University in Astana (since 2009), work with North American and British curricula, teaching staff, English-language teaching and models of university governance. The leading positions of Anglo-Saxon university in international university rankings have also shaped policy priorities, as in regard to university autonomy:

> *"Simple analysis shows that the best education systems are those that are autonomous, where universities are autonomous. This is a simple conclusion. Just look at rankings. […] Our universities do not understand this. They are afraid that when the autonomy comes, they will not be given money anymore. But in the world, where there is autonomy, there is also good money."* (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).

The Kazakh governance has actively courted and invited international organizations to advise them on reforming their higher education system. Kazakhstan invited the OECD and the World Bank to conduct an evaluation of their university's governance arrangements in 2006 and subsequently adopted most of that review's recommendations into the State Programs for Education Development. On the impact of international organizations, a senior HEI leader comments:

> *"[International organizations] conducted their audits and gave their conclusions and the MoES changed the rules of the game. The ministry spent a lot of our money on these audits and they were in principle justified. The ministry finds itself in such a position that it has to listen to other points of views." (Interview KZ No. 21, 2017)*

Lastly, since the first Bolashak scholarships were granted to outgoing students in 1993, 11.126 Kazakhstani citizens have studied at the 200 most highly universities in 33 countries, most of them in the United States and Great Britain (Bolashak, 2017). After the foundation of Nazarbayev University, in 2011, scholarships were reallocated to graduate students in Master's and PhD programs. In the meantime, many Bolashak graduates increasingly occupied leading positions in state and private organizations in Kazakhstan, mostly in Almaty and Astana (Perna, Orosz, & Jumakulov, 2015). Several stakeholders have stressed the fact that the last two ministers of education and Science, Aslan Sarinzhipov and Erlan Sagadiyev, had received parts of their higher education in the United States (Interview KZ No. 21, 2017). Interviewees repeatedly pointed out the how the wide-scale participation in academic mobility through Bolashak and other mobility programs is influencing mental models about academic governance, both within HEIs, as well as within the MoES itself (Interview KZ No. 21, 2017). These graduates thus represent important "transmission vectors" to international practices, as is the case of the Information-Analytical Center (IAC), a government think tank:

> *"Now, this trend is intensifying. We now understand the international context very well, and we are studying it. And, by the way, at IAC, almost 70% of our staff are young people who studied abroad, at good universities. So they studied, for example, education. Somewhere around 30% are people who, like me, have worked in the system all their life, so they know what Kazakh education is. We hope that this mix will lead to some effect, because on the one hand we have people who know foreign practices and can communicate them there and, on the other hand, there are people [here] who are professionals. This it makes it now possible to study and compare ourselves." (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).*

In **Moldova**, there are much fewer direct transmission vectors for the influence of global forces.

9.3.1.3 Impact of the Bologna Process

Just as Anglo-Saxon university models had acted as a point of reference during the 1990ies, in all case countries, the Bologna Process became an important point of orientation during the 2000ies. However, while the Bologna Process has exerted a significant degree of "isomorphic pull" in Kazakhstan and Moldova, in **Russia**, the BP lacked strong proponents. In consequence, it had only a passing effect on the governance of the higher education system. While during the first half of the 2000s, the BP did inspire a number of policy initiatives such as merging attestation with accreditation in 2000, and tentative pushes towards greater multi-stakeholder involvement in the governance of the system. One such example is that during the early 2000s, there were attempts to establish an independent system of 'public-professional accreditation' which would get certified by the State to the conduct accreditation independently of the state, similar to the German system of accreditation. This, however, never came to fruition. Several independent quality assurance agencies were founded and continue to exist to this but never received official recognition and thus only play a marginal role. Since the second half of the 2000ies, the Bologna Process did not figure as a noticeable influence on Russian HE policy. Integration into the common European Higher Education Area never was a top priority for the Russian government, which mainly hoped to improve the attractiveness of its universities to fee-paying foreign students through the mutual recognition of diplomas between Russia and the European Union (Tomusk, 2007).

In contrast, in **Kazakhstan**, entering the Bologna Process became a government policy priority as part of a wider drive towards international recognition of modernization of the HE system. In consequence, the Bologna Process exerted a significant degree of "isomorphic pull" in the formulation of the State Program for Educational Development (SPED), which make integration into the international and European higher education spaces their main objectives. The SPED explicitly relate changes to quality assurance and university autonomy to this goal. As one of the SPED's authors concludes:

> *"When we were developing the State programs, in order to identify to main directions, we always identified the main global trends, in the European Higher Education Area, in the Bologna Process, and precisely these priorities were always introduced in the events we organized and in the normative-legal acts, because, let's say, the Yerevan Meeting of Ministers of 2015 established priorities for the time until 2017, according to which the system of education of all countries which are part of the Bologna Process should develop, and since Kazakhstan participates in the Bologna Process we took on the responsibility to follow these priorities, for example student-centered learning, inclusive education, integration of education and production, these things became part of our national education programs. And now we include these aspects also in our normative-legal acts." (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017)*

Interviewed rectors see the related measures as its legitimate and logical consequences of this policy goal:

> *"Looking at the management and governance of HEIs, it is visible we study the experience of European HEIs and very much of American HEIs. If we say that Kazakhstan wants to join the European Education space, which Kazakhstan has already done when we signed the Bologna Declaration in 2010, then, of course, the governance of Kazakhstan's Higher Education System now also must respect the principles of the Process. That means modernizations, that means ECTS credit technology, that means internationalization." (Interview KZ No. 11, 2017)*

While policy *formulation* itself is far from tantamount to *implementation*, the SPED clearly acted as a strong transmission vector for (isomorphic) institutional change. Several interviewees highlight the role of the Bologna Process as instrumental in many changes of the governance structure. This is certainly retraceable for the advent of accreditation. Had it not been for the Bologna Process, there would have been few incentives to subscribe to the requirements of the ESG. Through national and international accreditation agencies, HEIs were suddenly assessed on the principles of transparency, the participation of students, the involvement of teaching staff in self-governance. Successfully passing accreditation became an incentive for changes in these areas (Interview KZ No. 21, 2017), with the final objective being international recognition. As one of the SPED's co-authors points out "*[The SPED] promoted HEI to international standards, and in particular to European ones. […] It created a powerful impetus and created the preconditions for the realization of the action lines of the Bologna Process. […] But participation in the Bologna Process was not our goal in and by itself. It was important to do this so that we would be noticed and understood in Europe and the world."* (Interview KZ No. 9, 2017).

For **Moldova**, the relevance of the Bologna Process and supporting European Union activities is hard to overstate. The Bologna Process, EU Joint projects, and the conditions formulated in the association agreement have arguably instigated most of the policy reforms in higher education since Moldova began to prepare to join the Bologna Process in 2003: Aside from structural changes related to creating a common European Higher Education Area[89], the Bologna Process was also an important impetus for change in the governance arrangements. The urging of European partners that Moldova adhere to the provisions of European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) on the independence of a Quality Assurance Agency were instrumental for the Communist government to launch the foundation of an quality assurance agency outside of the Ministry of Education with first the *Agenţia de Evaluare şi Examinare – AEE* in 2006 and the *Agenţie de Asigurare a Calităţii – AAC* in 2008, although neither ever became active in the area of higher education. Because of the Bologna Process, the format of state standards (*Plan Cadru*) was changed. Lastly, as a direct consequence, the Bologna Process provided a strong argument in favor of the introduction of doctoral studies as the third cycle of higher education into Moldovan universities instead of the exclusive right of the Moldovan Academy of Sciences to award doctorate degrees.

[89] Such as the introduction of Bachelor's and Master's degrees, modules as structural units of study programs and the use of ECTS

Many of these changes were prepared and supported by EU-funded TEMPUS projects. TEMPUS projects supported issues like updating and developing new curricula by exposing university staff to international examples, the implementation of quality management systems at universities, e-learning, and by equipping universities with modern equipment and promoting student and staff mobility. These projects played an important role in driving and informing legislation and did change structures and practices in (some) higher education institutions. Regarding the governance of the higher education system, new internal quality management systems were first tried out at a number of universities within the framework of Tacis SCM T005B05-2005 "The Development of a Quality Assurance System within selected Moldovan Universities" and the Tacis University Management 26091-2005 project *"Implementarea sistemului institutional de gestionare a asigurarii interne a calitatii in invatamantul superior din Moldova*". The EUniAM, the ATHENA and the QUAEM projects contributed to the development of the 2014 code of education, the foundation of the new quality assurance agency ANACIP and somewhat greater university autonomy. The introduction of strategic advisory councils and the expansion of financial autonomy was accompanied by EU-funded projects on university autonomy. Several university pro-rectors stated that without these EU-funded projects there would have been rather little change in Moldovan higher education.

9.3.2 Regional forces

Mutual influence between Russia and Kazakhstan in HE reforms

The dynamics of global influences between Russia and Kazakhstan are worthy of note. In several instances during the late 1990ies and early 2000ies, policies were developed and discussed in Russian expert circles, to be taken up and implemented more swiftly in Kazakhstan. This was the case with the development of the standardized testing and the money-follows-student scheme in HE financing (Interview RU No. 13, 2017). From the Russian perspective, Kazakhstan thus became an experimental space for Russian policy-makers to observe the dynamics before implementing their own schemes. By the end of the 2000ies, this form of policy-transfer seems to have stopped, however, as Russia and Kazakhstan began to make different policy choices.

Influence of Romania and Russia as models for Moldova

Due to the cultural and linguistic proximity of Romania and Moldova and the significant number of Moldovan students studying in Romania[90], it would be reasonable to assume for policy transfer to have taken place. This is documented for reforms in secondary education with the creation of lyceums and the national Baccalaureate, the centralized examination, which is a prerequisite to enter higher education. While influences are clearly visible in Study programs imported from Romania (mostly in the arts

[90] Romania provides many scholarships to Moldavian students and, indeed, many of Moldova's political class have studied in Romania, mostly during the 1990ies.

and humanities), as well as from Russia (mostly in technical fields), a distinct influence on the governance of the higher education system is not visible. The Romanian government and Romanian experts did, however, support Moldova in adopting to the Bologna Process, such as in developing the structure of the new quality assurance agency ANACIP.

9.3.3 National-level: Governments and Ministries responsible for higher education

What all three country cases have in common that the state in the form of governments and ministries lays down a strong claim to steer the system (see chapter 9.3.6.1). The relative strength and capacity of the state in the governance of the three post-Soviet countries has waxed and waned over the past 25 years.

In **Russia**, during the 1990ies, the state considerably withdrew from steering the higher education system and HEIs received substantial institutional autonomy. This was driven as much by policy as by necessity: "*We cannot give you money but we can give you freedom*" was the understanding between HEIs and the Ministry of Education (Interview RU No. 14, 2017). HEIs received considerable financial autonomy and the ability to generate their own income gave HEIs (respectively their rectors) considerable autonomy from the state. The government did not have a strong policy agenda and was not actively pursuing a development strategy (Interview RU No. 9, 2017) while funds were severely limited due to the economic crisis. This had given rise to a very powerful Russian Rectors' Union (see chapter 9.3.4). The balance of power gradually shifted back to the State over the 2000ies, as the 'power vertical' of the Russian government strengthened. The cause of the shift in power was towards the state was economic as well as political. Since the 2000ies, the share of state funding increased relative to income from tuition fees. Through the introduction of the Unified State Exam, the State gained control over the size of the admitted student cohort and closed a highly profitable source of non-state income from (corruption in) university admissions. In addition, the shrinking student numbers resulting from overall demographic decline, reduced the potential income from tuition fees. Increased state support for leading universities in the *Federal Universities, National Research Universities, "5-100",* and *flagship universities* programs came at the price of losing the right to elect their own rectors and submitting to a regime of regular evaluation of their implementation progress towards their HEI's development program (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). According to Forrat (2015), these funding programs for large HEIs serve to ensure the loyalty of the elite of the higher education system, and increase the State's legitimacy in taking a more prominent role in the governance of the whole system. Aside from a much stronger state control over HEIs resources, the increased power of the state lies in the development of new instruments of state intervention in the form of licensing and accreditation, the state monitoring of performance indicators, state inspections and a campaign of closures and mergers of HEIs. The resurgence of the state as a steering and intervening actor, the governmental preference for using bureaucratic control and regulations in top-down reform efforts, as well as the overall geopolitical isolation of Russia from the West

since 2012 can be seen as the key reasons why the Bologna Process did not exert its isomorphic pressure towards independent accreditation in Russia.

In **Kazakhstan**, the role and strength of the state in higher education has developed quite differently from that in the Russian Federation. During the 1990ies, Kazakhstan went much less far in granting autonomy to its HEIs. Rectors were always appointed by the Ministry of Education and Science, and, in the case of National Universities, even by the President himself. Indeed, until 2004, successive ministers increased centralized control and oversight over the higher education system. The role of the state is also particular in that, in contrast to Russia, where neither President Yeltsin nor Putin took a personal interest in education, President Nazarbayev has actively shaped (higher) education policy almost since independence. In 1994, the Bolashak scholarship program was created and ever since the *Kazakhstan 2030* strategy in 1997, the Kazakh president actively promoted a modernization policy based on what was perceived as Western models. Reforms during the 1990ies and the 2000ies were implemented in a pronounced top-down fashion, often at great speed, as was the case with the Bologna Process and the replacement of the Soviet-style *aspirantura* und *doktoratura* with PhD degrees:

> *"When we rushed to the Bologna process, it was a very big shock for universities. It was a particular shock for us, when we began to travel and representatives of European universities came, and we learned that this was a process. For us it was a one-day decision. All postgraduate studies needed to be closed, and in 2010, in November I defended my thesis. Imagine, I just managed to jump onto the last wagon. Otherwise my PhD would have been thrown out. I would have needed to start anew, can you imagine? That was again top-down, the decision was taken and in 2010, it entered into force" (Interview KZ No. 13, 2017)*

As the development of the governance of the higher education system in Kazakhstan shows, the key driving force behind the changes in the system have been the MoES and the presidential modernization agenda. An international higher education scholar at Nazarbayev University concurs that HEIs are determined by the MoES's steering and that the usual approach when wanting to change something is to ask the MoES to act:

> *"One thing that you have to understand about Kazakhstan's higher education system is that the government is in charge. Universities cannot really do much without this vertical governance going on. Within this framework we understand that the universities have been requesting certain changes that the ministry could respond to or at least consider. (Interview KZ No. 15, 2017)*

The development of the first State Program for Educational Development (SPED) in 2004 was extensively based on the analysis of international models and international trends (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017) with the explicit and overarching government objective to bring Kazakhstan closer to international practices in education. This policy direction was far from shared among governmental elites: At the time of the preparation of the SPED, there was strong opposition within the MoES and the CCES to reducing

the level of state supervision and grant greater autonomy to HEIs. The move from attestation to accreditation was arguably possible only because during the preparation of the SPED, the President demanded that all ministries reduce the amount of oversight-related controls and the number of inspections in their areas (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017). The presidential strategies "*Kazakhstan 2030*", "*Kazakhstan 2050*" and "*100 concrete steps – plan for the nation*" increasingly strongly stressed government reforms and pressed state bodies to reduce oversight and control and grant greater autonomy. The reforms in the area of university autonomy, the introduction of governance boards within HEIs and greater involvement of stakeholders such as the Atameken business association (itself founded by presidential order) were all enforced due to an active involvement of the presidential administration. All interviewed parties point to the presidential authority of the SPED overriding the ministerial authority as key to securing its implementation. As the MoES's action plans need to be based on the SPED, these documents indeed wielded great authority. Most of the proposals included in the SPEDs were eventually implemented even against resistance and under different changing ministers of education with different policy priorities. As ministers of education and science had a fairly short tenure (2 years on average), the presidential SPED have created a form of policy continuity. It seems reasonable to assume that without the presidential authority behind the SPED, this would not have happened. This belief is indeed shared by several interviewees when discussing the SPED:

> *"The state program is approved by the president. […] [Former minister of education] Zhumagoluov, said, that he put so much [content] in that it would not be possible for them [the opponents] to cancel it out. They do not have time to cancel it. But the question is not [whether it is difficult] to cancel, but also to understand it and to move the process forward faster! Accreditation was included back then [in 2011]. And it is just starting now!" (Interview KZ No. 12, 2017)*

The presidential authority was especially visible in the conflict over the shift from state attestation to independent accreditation which culminated in 2015 in an open confrontation of the chairman of the Ak-Zhol opposition party and Aslan Sarinzhipov, the then-Minister of Education and Science. The majority Nur Otan party supported the new law on education proposed by the MoES. The arguments made during this struggle all relate to the (presidential) authority of the SPED:

> *"In the parliamentary working groups, there was of course nothing we could do. And when the bill was brought under discussion, our chairman gave a very tough speech. He emphasized the fact that they were changing the state program, the main document. If they changed that, then they should recognize that they had failed to implement it properly. They had decided on the changes already in 2008 and it was already 2015, so much time [had passed] and they still claimed that the [higher education] system was not ready. So, what had they been doing [during all this time]? […] He told them in this way: "Admit that you did not fulfill it [the SPED2011-2020], and that is why you want to change it" (Interview KZ No. 19, 2017)*

The personal backing of the president has allowed the SPED2005-2010 and SPED2011-2020 to become powerful transmission vectors for cross-national transfer of practices.

Moldova

Of the three countries, in Moldova, the role of the state is the most paradox. On the one hand, the Ministry of Education (MoE) it is the undisputed center of governance (and, in some cases, management) of the higher education system. On the other hand, it is prone to institutional capture by shifting political alliances and lacks in capacity to effectively steer the system. This pattern has stifled reforms in many instances, yet the MoE has also ensured the continuing operation of the higher education system and the maintenance of minimal standards against sometimes difficult odds.

The legal centrality of the Ministry of Education in governance and management of the HE system is striking: The MoE develops legislation, monitors and enforces it. In legislation as recent as the 2014 code of education, the MoE and even the extended Government remain the final decision-making organ for all major decisions. The MoE and the government remain the final instances to approve (or, therefore, to reject) any decisions of subordinate bodies. The government allocates state-funded places to HEIs and thus controls the financing of the majority of public HEIs[91]. The effect of this is that the particular ministers of education are perceived the decisive actors and true centers of power, much more than formal bodies and structures. Despite the high degree of centralization of hierarchical power within the Ministry of Education, effectiveness in policy-implementation has been very low on average. This can be at least partially explained by a combination of *political instability*, *political influence*, and a *lack of capacity* within both Ministry and HEIs caused by a *lack of adequate resources*.

Political instability has made work of the MoE challenging by having to work with frequently changing policy priorities of different ministers and vice-ministers. These often entered office with a set of new policies without a good understanding the complexities and internal interrelatedness of the higher education system. As one university leader points explains, these frequent personnel changes and power struggles in the past have hamstrung the MoE:

> *"Higher education is not so efficient because of the changing inside of the ministry of education. Whenever you have a new minister, he just puts out the old people and they engage new people and they try to do something and they say 'oh, my previous colleague (but he is always not a colleague but a competitor) he was wrong! It was not correctly done, we should change!' and they just try to do in another way." (Interview MD No. 3, 2016)*

A former long-serving official from the MoE concurs with this assessment:

> *"Different ministers saw different priorities for their mandates. And their mandates were short. And always in the beginning they put their accent on certain things and after half a year or a*

[91] Some public HEIs are under the remit of ministries other than the MoE, e.g. the Ministry of Health

year they changed and they never managed to realize their second priority because there comes another minister who will be there as well for half a year" (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

While tenure of ministers has been comparatively short in other countries, Moldova's parliamentary democracy lacks other stabilizing factors in policy continuity such as the as one Kazakhstan's president has played. Instead, political parties have tended to exert a large degree of **political influence** over the minister of education. As an acting vice-rector explains:

"Unfortunately [when a new] minister comes [..] all functionaries need to do what the minister says and the minister says what his political boss wants him to. For example: [They might say] "change the directors of the schools, and [install] as directors members of my political party". Unfortunately, this happens. The politization of the Ministry of Education is our major default. […]. [This happens not only to distribute] positions [of power] but to keep their influence in pedagogical institutions. It means: "[when] the director is from our party […] when the elections come [I] will say "vote for my party and convince the parents of your students to vote for my party" (Interview MD No. 3, 2016)

Moldova is a small country and many individuals in leadership positions are connected to political parties. The large role of political parties on legislation and the Ministry of Education makes it attractive to exploit such connections in favor of promoting individual interests. A former rector takes a pessimistic perspective:

"In Moldova, every ministry, let's take education, is subject to political influence. […] Now the liberals [party] leads the ministry, and they put there [in power] Minister [Corinna] Fusu and [they] make their policies. The minister by himself does not represent anything. The minister is nominated by the party. What did they [the political parties of the ruling coalition] do? They distributed the ministries amongst themselves and every party does what it wants [in their areas]. And the minister represents the party and does everything the party wants from him. […] At another time, [it will be] someone else. Today it is one, tomorrow another one come and he will destroy everything. […] The matter is that this strongly disorganizes the system. […] This mess which is going on, […] they [the parties] compete for the power. That is all. And that is why there is heavy corruption everywhere" (Interview MD No. 12, 2016)

Indeed, the history of Moldova's HE system is full of examples of the influence of party politics and full of suspicions of rent-seeking behavior of certain actors[92]. Several private universities are well-connected to political figures acting to safe-guard their interests (Interview MD No. 3, 2016). The existence

[92] Two examples that were mentioned by several interview partners include the Moldovan State Institute of International Relations and University of the Academy of Science. The former was founded in 2003 by the Communist government and the Minister of Education, Valentin Beniuc, became the first and to date only rector of the Institute. A second case is the University of the Academy of Science, of which the wife of the president of the Academy of Science became the founding and still-acting rector.

of such informal political networks, and the protection of private interests by political parties undermines and consistently threatens the coherence, stability and effectiveness of governance of the Moldovan HE system.

The **lack of resources** of the department of higher education within the MoE is a second impediment for effective policy. As one former MoE official mentions:

> *"There were times when we were about 14 people in the department of higher education. Then there was a minister who said "we don't need so many people. I can work also with half that number. And just like this he [reduced the] number of employees to five. […] So [since 2008] then there were five people taking care of the entire higher education system" (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)*

These five employees are responsible for a wide range of oversight tasks including licensing of study programs, coordinating and quality assuring the elaboration of qualification frameworks, drafting higher education policy, participating in international projects and conferences, among other day-to-day tasks[93]. What adds to the precarious position in which the MoE as the main oversight body for higher education finds itself, is that civil servants, even those in the ministries, receive very low salaries between 3000MDL and 10000MDL (130€-500€) per month. These factors, together with a high workload and an often-stressful working environment leads to a frequent staff turnover and the continuous need to replace lost expertise. If it were not for the personal dedication of a small number of key officials, it hard to imagine how the higher education system could be governed in any semblance of professionality at all. As a key ministry official remarks:

> *"There were periods when I was just holding the system together, protecting it from attempts of the Communists to change something* […] *Can you imagine what will happen if I leave tomorrow? There will be someone else, anyone else. Maybe he will be better than me but until then, you need time. Anybody else will need courage and time" (Interview MD No. 6, 2016)*

Unfortunately, the lack of available resources is a problem that concerns not only HEIs and the Ministry of Education, but extends to the wider governance architecture, such as the new QAA ANACIP.

> *"Our [QA] agency is modeled after the Romanian agency. […] I believe that that this is not very good because the conditions of its establishment were different, […] they [the Romanian government] founded it in such a format with government support that was completely different. Here they founded it but the support…ask them yourself what their salary is. […] How can you demand objectivity from these people? […] They selected good people and they are all responsible and they are all trying. But under our conditions, you need to somehow motivate people.*

[93] In addition, as of 2015, the MoE has taken it upon itself to verify the applications for doctoral theses at universities, assessing, according to themselves, the necessity of doctoral thesis topics, the quality of the proposals as well as the qualifications of doctoral students and supervisors.

Lower salaries as theirs [at the agency] don't exist! These salaries are just not serious." (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

Given the circumstances, the MoE has quite a track record to show for between 2010 and 2015: It has driven the development of HEIs in many areas, drafting a series of recommendations on curriculum design, redacted subject-specific qualification frameworks, regulations on doctoral schools and programs as well as negotiated the development of a new code of education (see above).

Lastly, an all-pervading problem specific to the small HE system of Moldova is that the overall number of individuals teaching at HEIs is comparatively small. This creates a web of **strong actor interdependencies**. As a representative of the Moldovan QAA summarized:

> *"The problem of our country is that it is small, people know each other. And especially in Chisinau, because the salaries are so low and the legislation does not outlaw it, people work in several HEIs, somewhere full-time and somewhere part-time, so they all depend on each other. Here, we need to recognize that as long as these are the conditions, […] people will continue to think that there is no other way [than to be corrupt] and that they need each other"* (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

The economic necessity for teaching staff to work at several HEIs to make ends meet, creates problems of quality as well as a strong interdependence of everybody engaged in the HE system:

> *"For us this is a really negative factor. Because it turns out that a person is head of department here, in another private HEI he is pro-rector, and in a third one he teaches. And this deteriorates the quality" (Interview MD No. 2, 2016)*

The problem of low wages and strong interdependency between individuals pervades the entire higher education system, including buffer organizations and the Government institutions themselves: Not only do key employees of the new QAA work a second job at a university to make ends meet, but so do even some employees of the Ministry of Education. For a key oversight body such as an accreditation agency, this creates doubts on their true independence. As one dean mentions:

> *"I think to be independent and to take very hard decisions is important at the moment in Moldova. Because the agency is not really independent. Still today the agency is dependent on the MoE. Because of the budget, because of the office and many, many other things. They are not independent to pay their own bills. […] They depend on the Ministry of Education. The influence, the internal influence and the political pressure will be used during the accreditation process which will start soon. At the moment we are in the mist between needs and realities." (Interview MD No. 2, 2016)*

The practice of multiple employments clearly does not mean that individuals in any of these institutions are corrupt – most interview partners believe in the meaningfulness of their work and work long hours for little pay. It does, however, create a structural risk to their independence and impartiality.

In summary, political volatility, political interventionism, a lack of adequate financing and staff capacity within governmental institutions, and strong actor interdependencies has left the HE system exposed to the volatilities of Moldovan political majorities and their particular individual interests and has weakened the power of the Moldovan government to pursue an agenda of focused change.

9.3.4 National-level: Stakeholder organizations

Higher Education Institutions are far from restricted to being mere objects of governance arrangements. By leveraging their individual expertise or political standing and by forming coalitions, they are able to articulate their collective interests, to influence policy, and to engage in the governance of the system itself. In this sub-chapter, I will explore the role of stakeholder organizations in the evolution of governance arrangements in the three case countries, which have played very different roles in the development of the different case countries and fulfill different functions in the governance of the HE systems.

In **Russia**, during the 1990ies, rectors, which had been powerful during Soviet times, had gained an even larger degree of control over their HEIs. They had consolidated their power within their HEIs and had created sources of income for their HEI and themselves personally, such as from their control over university admissions, from tuition income, or from renting out premises. By the end of the 1990s, rectors had developed *"significant financial interests, and their association effectively became a union of owners and entrepreneurs.*" (Adamskiy, 2000). While not wanting to lose their relative independence, privileges and access to rents, ideologically, they claimed to safeguard what remained of the excellent Soviet higher education system from further degradation, which gave them legitimacy in the eyes of teaching staff, members of the communist party and large parts of the population. During the 1990ies, the *Russian Rectors' Union* around Viktor Sadovnichiy, the Rector of Moscow State University, formed a political alliance with the communist party, which gave it a political base and direct influence to fight off liberal reforms in higher education. In part due to the resistance of rectors, in 2005, the GIFO-financing model was given up in favor of at least preserving the EGE against opposition. As Forrat (2015) shows, since the early 2000ies, however, the Rectors' Union's stance towards the toward state educational policy changed from one of opposition to negotiation and collaboration (*see figure below*).

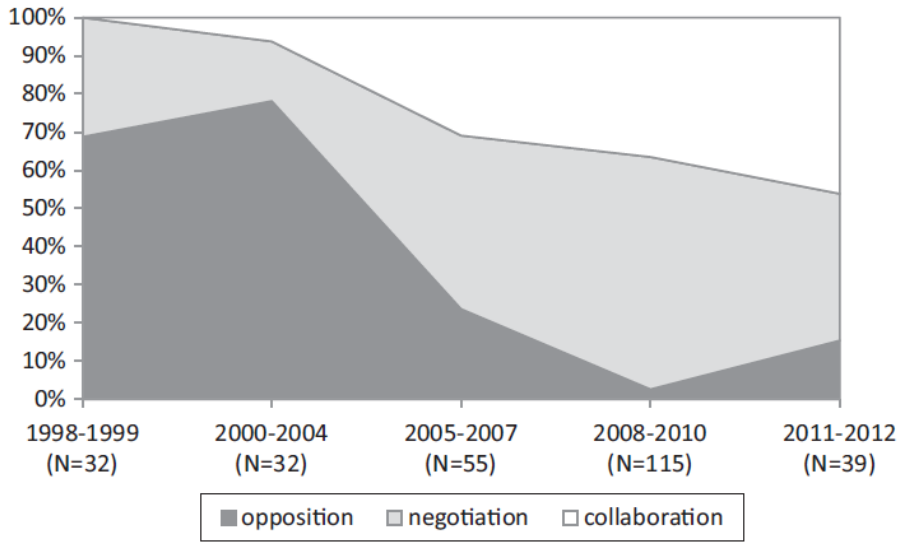

Figure 15: Change in the position of the Rectors' Union toward state educational policy based on analysis of EastView Russian Central Newspapers data by Natalia Forrat, taken from Forrat (2013)

The shift in power away from rectors towards the state was related to greater state control over enrollment, greater state funding as well as stronger state control over HE activities. This relegated the Rectors' Union to an advisory body which, while still a fairly influential in an advisory capacity, never recovered its position as a key policy-setting actor.

In **Kazakhstan**, since rectors of public HEIs were directly appointed by the government, they took a much less independent stance. Consequently, during the 1990ies, public universities were far less organized than in Russia. Private universities, who enjoyed a much greater degree of autonomy, established the *Association of Higher Educational Institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan* in 2002[94]. Whereas their role in the governance of the HE system was fairly minor, this began to change with the SPED2011-2020. Indeed, at the same time the state re-established its preeminence as a policy-setting actor in Russia, in Kazakhstan the state began experimenting with shared stakeholder governance. Since the 2010ies, Kazakhstan's Business Association Atameken[95] as well as the Association of Higher Educational Institutions are accredited with the MoES and are obligatorily involved in assessing and commenting on all changes to normative documents and legislation on higher education proposed by the MoES. Neither organization, however, developed policy-setting influence.

In contrast to the more stable authoritarian governments in Kazakhstan and Russia, which eventually established themselves as the key actors in the governance of the higher education system, in **Moldova**,

[94] By 2017, the association is comprised 77 private and state universities, which enroll more than 86% of all students. The association actively lobbies for the interests of HEIs and is respected by the government as a source to be consulted for expertise and the views of HEIs.
[95] The business association Atameken was established by Presidential decree to increase self-governance and create a coordinated voice for the business community.

state institutions have shown themselves prone to institutional capture by political parties and their respective special interests. The degree of political influence over the minister of education, the predominant model of hierarchical decision-making within Moldovan organizations, and the lack of professional and sufficiently independent civil-servants who could maintain a degree of stability and reliability leaves the Moldovan HE system exposed to the constant volatility of the often-shifting Moldovan political landscape. In this situation, the role and self-perception of the Moldovan Rectors' Union has become that of 1) 'defenders of the university sector' against reforms by the Ministry of Education, 2) of lobbying for the interests of universities against the powerful Academy of Science and its privileges in research and 3) to serve as a partner for international (mostly European) cooperation projects. Its influence on vetoing policy-decisions has been substantial (e.g. on the role of new governing boards) but has mostly served the preservation of the status quo.

9.3.5 National-level: Higher Education Institutions

In Russia as well as Kazakhstan, some HEIs have emerged which have become change agents in the governance of the HE system not (only) through political lobbying but through the capacity building activities they offer to other HEIs.

In **Russia**, among these are the *Higher School of Economics (HSE)* and the *Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO*. These institutions offer continuing education, trainings, consulting and facilitation to university leaders, advising them on strategy development and implementation and promoting a new view of the university governance and management. Since 2011, the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO has been offering "Rectors' Schools" to train HEI leaders and top-level administrators, which have attracted a considerable number of university leaders. The HSE Institute of Education was established in 2012 and offers graduate programs on education management and research. While it is too early to judge their impact, these programs are creating new communities of practice promoting new ideas about institutional governance and management in Russia. This is particularly visible in HEIs participating in the various excellence programs, as they actively seek out consulting services from leading HEIs to develop and implement their strategic development plans.

In **Kazakhstan**, *Nazarbayev University (NU)* was explicitly founded in 2009 to act as a model of a world-class university for Kazakhstan's universities, promote international level research and contribute to the development of Kazakhstan's capital Astana as a hub of international innovation (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016). The majority of its teaching and research staff received their education at leading universities world-wide, its governance structure is based on US-American models and every one of NU's 'schools' is co-managed by a corresponding faculty of a leading foreign HEI. In cooperation with the *UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education*[96] and University College London (UCL), the Gradu-

[96] https://www.lfhe.ac.uk/

ate School of Education conducts yearly 'leadership schools' and training programs for HE administrators, HEI leadership, advisory board members on leadership, management and governance in universities. During the first three years of the programs existance, rectors and vice-rectors were trained. In 2015, this was expanded to include faculty deans, heads of departments and representatives of the academic management. Altogether, NU acts as an important "transmission vector" of new governance practices in HE in Kazakhstan. As a senior MoES representative describes NU's impact:

> *"Of those people who passed their advanced training [at NU], some became rectors of universities. They developed as personalities. Today we have individual universities moving towards becoming a research university. Others are moving towards becoming an entrepreneurial university. Another plus is that they gained experience in developing a development strategy for their universities. […] Step by step, gradually, we will become ready [to become part of the world community]. " (Interview KZ No. 17, 2017)*

A former vice-rector concurs with this assessment:

> *"As a university employee, I felt it […] in 2010. HEIs began to make strategic plans, for example, based on some single approaches that were discussed and on which we were trained. […] All universities started writing strategies, and we were given detailed guidelines, how to write these strategies. Then it started with project management at the state level. They began to talk a lot about this. Now a lot of civil servants are being trained in project management. I believe that all these processes led to the understanding that, really, there should be monitoring and evaluation. Often even simple analysis shows that we do not really know how effective reforms are, that are not monitored or what effect they have. […] This is now changing" (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017)*

A similar role is played by the independent quality assurance agencies in Russia and Moldova. These use the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and thus act as transmission vectors into HEIs for topics such as student-centered learning, competence-based study program development, or stakeholder involvement. The fact that QAAs assess these criteria creates a pressure for HEIs to take them into account in their internal practices. QAAs also offer trainings on these topics which further support facilitate this change process.

In **Moldova**, there is no national institution providing training for HEI leaders. There are, however, many EU-funded programs and projects which include similar activities (see 9.3.1.3).

9.3.6 National-level: Institutional factors of path dependence

While most of the above forces have acted to promote change, there are powerful forces resisting it. In this context, authors on path-dependency such as North (1990), Pierson (2000) or Marginson and Rhoades (2002) stress the importance (historically) embedded institutions, which maintain and reinforce

the status quo. Such factors are visible in all case countries (to differing degrees) and will be discussed in this final sub-chapter.

9.3.6.1 Hierarchical mental model of governance

The Soviet model of governance of was one of hierarchical management: The Ministry of Education established the normative base, set targets, monitored them, and enforced its procedural rules. Aside from at a small number of elite universities, rectors' main responsibility was assuring *compliance* with legislation and *implementing* of the plans which they received from the ministerial center. In turn, they were the head of university administrations, had a large degree of discretion and control over university finances, and presided university academic councils. Academic councils, in their turn, are the supreme – and, with few exceptions the only – bodies to establish policy on teaching and learning and typically do not delegate any of their powers to other bodies. Since they are headed by the rector and do not themselves have a supporting infrastructure, rectors exert very powerful influence within them. This form of distribution of authority established during the Soviet period clearly remained in place in all three countries. The hierarchical model of governance continues within HEIs. As has been shown, due to their control over finances and appointments, if anything, rectors are more powerful than they were during the Soviet period.

In all three countries, the principle of hierarchy is deeply engrained in the mental models actors have of governance of the higher education system. For both Moldova and Kazakhstan, most interviewees described the pattern that incoming ministers of education would assume they should manage the HEIs under their purview in a hierarchical style of command and control (often disregarding or counteracting acting policies and legislation). Notably, even though they may criticize individual policies or behaviors of the Ministry of Education, only in a few isolated cases did rectors question the basic *legitimacy* of the Ministry's direct steering of the higher education system. On the contrary, most interviewees supported the Ministry's role of steering and guiding the higher education system. On the other side, many state HEIs tend to be reactive and expect regulations and orders from the Ministry rather than taking decisions independently. As one acting dean of a Moldovan University observes:

> *"Still today I think that the mentality is the biggest problem. Always they are saying 'we have to ask the Ministry of Education. We are waiting for decisions from the Ministry of Education. We are waiting for the paper from the MoE.' Everything is linked to the ministry of education! Still today when we have the new quality assurance agency, we have to wait for the decisions of the ministry of education. The Ministry of Education for the entire educational system is like a god*!" (Interview MD No. 2, 2016)

In all three case countries, it is a common strategy for rectors to lobby the ministry to issue a directive providing them with a government mandate to act in a certain way, even in cases where they have all

the formal authority to take decisions themselves. As a Kazakh rector and former MoES official describes his perception:

> *"We always wait until someone allows or forbids something. […] Why are [university rectors] always trying to get the ministry to give them an order. [They should] be happy, when nothing is prescribed, because it means that [they] are free in this sphere! But universities demand, "give us a specific figure", "how much should we…" or "give us a specific instruction" […] Not only [are orders given] from above, but also below, universities are waiting for some sort of regulation, and even ask for, demand this regulation." (Interview KZ No. 13, 2017)*

In internal governance arrangements of HEIs, the principle of hierarchy is perpetuated in that rectors are simultaneously heads of university administrations, they control university finances and strategy and preside over university senates. The president of the Moldovan Academy of Science, Gheorge Duca summarizes this overall observation of the predominant cultural model in the following quote:

> *„ Typically only one person decided [in the Soviet Union]. You went to one person, the party chairman then, and that was it. […] This keeps us in the past, because we are products of the Soviet Union. We were taught this way, they taught us to manage this way and this is how we live and manage. And as a matter of fact, out of the large Soviet Union we created many small ones. And we manage these in the same way. We need one more generation, and maybe another one, because the one that comes now is acting the same way that we, the older generation are acting, because that is what they learnt from us" "* (Interview MD No. 1, 2016)

In principle, the majority of leaders in higher education in the case countries point to the downsides of the hierarchical governance model and most claim to be in favor of greater autonomy and a clearer differentiation between governance and management. The very nature of the existing system as well as mental models and established practices seem to lead them, however, to perpetuate the system they themselves criticize. As a quote representative of all three case countries, an acting vice-rector of a large private Moldovan university states:

> *"Unfortunately, […] we have a very uncomfortable Soviet heritage and even if today the new code of education says that universities are free to decide, we have very retrograde rectors. [They say] 'If we should do something, the ministry should show us how we should do it. And only if the minister tells us what we should and how we should do it, maybe we will do it'. It is about mentality, and not only conservative mentality, but really, really we should change our Soviet heritage and it is very, very difficult" (Interview MD No. 3, 2016)*

Hartley et al. (2016) argue that the system of shared governance by boards of trustees which Kazakhstan plans to implement rests on practices and mental models shaped by participatory democracy, which academic leaders in Kazakhstan likely do not share due to the Soviet legacy of strong centralized state

control and which may indeed conflict with existing norms and values. In their study of responses of institutions and their leaders to these changes, they found that

> *"in Kazakhstan, many academic leaders understand that a centrally planned system is one approach for ensuring fairness, efficiency, uniform quality, and eliminating corruption [which has been a significant issue since independence (Heyneman 2010)]. A prevailing assumption is that expertise resides at the top—whether at the central system in the form of the Ministry or at the institutional level in the person of the rector."* (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016)

It is notable that even though all three countries have introduced some form of governance boards to expand stakeholder involvement, as of 2015, in no country have these boards yet received real decision-making powers. In Moldova, rectors have fought strategic advisory boards whose powers remained unclear in legislation. In Russia, advisory boards have purely representative and advisory functions, while in governing boards, the HEI's founder (usually the Ministry of Education and Science) has the final decision-making authority. In the case of Kazakhstan, legal contradictions complicate giving governance boards powers, as rectors are legally accountable for anything that happens within their HEI. As a senior higher education researcher from Kazakhstan noted:

> *"The Idea of lay governance is a new idea in Kazakhstan, that has been used to having strong leaders, even historically, and then during the Soviet times with its totalitarian or authoritarian structures in place. So there hasn't been much of a collegial decision-making in the context of the country. We can take the forms, we can take the structures, the thing is the culture that we need to change." (Interview KZ No. 3, 2017)*

9.3.6.2 Lack of trust between actors

Underlying the still-widespread hierarchical command and control approach to governance, seems to be a distinct mutual distrust between actors as well as between levels of the higher education system. In none of the government agencies of the studied country cases does there seem to be a general attitude of trust in HEIs to use greater autonomy for their own development. Instead, a suspicion is widespread that any easing of control will lead to corruption. As explained by Sagintayeva & Kurakbayev (2015) for the case of Kazakhstan, the State maintains central control for the sake of quality, a wariness of corruption and low confidence in the ability of university leadership to exercise new powers effectively'. The same seems true for Moldova and Russia as well. In addition to not trusting HEIs to act according to national and international standards, the ministries often doubt that HEIs would do something constructive with their autonomy without government control. The desire to control the proper implementation of policies and implement state strategy lies at the bottom of many legislative frameworks which, reserve the final decision-making rights on quality assurance (as in Moldova) or the appointment of

rectors (as in Kazakhstan) for the ministry. Within universities, there is an expectation (based on experience) that the ministries will probably not respect new governance arrangements. As one Moldovan vice-rector recounts:

> *"The law [the education code] says that universities are free to implement different study programs, to keep the value of academic freedom and autonomy. Now, after the adoption of the code [on education] we have our dear MoE who just elaborates the new regulations. If you compare these regulations with the previous, Soviet ones, they are identical! So the code says you are free, you should take decisions in the senate, decide about final exams, quality assurance, etc. and after that they just elaborate norms and these norms are very, very coercive […] and it's not easy" (Interview MD No. 3, 2016)*

Likewise, as a former minister of education of Kazakhstan stated, the legal framework notwithstanding, rectors are exposed to the ministry which retains the permanent option to intervene:

> *"You see, the minister is the minister. He has a lot of powers. […] To say that the minister could not remove a rector... Well, of course there are cases that he cannot. This relates to rectors of national universities, because the rectors of national universities are appointed by the president. In this case it is difficult even for a minister. But the rector of a regional university. Why not? Any organization has some shortcomings, some mistakes are made, therefore ... […] If the minister wants to [get rid of a rector], he can. That is why he is the minister" (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017)*

It would be misleading, however, to explain tight regulation with a desire to keep control. The ministry often simply does not trust the ability of the majority of universities to act according to national and international standards. They suspect (and, as accreditations carried out by EKKA and ARACIS in same cases confirmed) that many HEIs fail to follow the normative framework. The intervention is justified by HEIs not being able to do "the right thing" by themselves:

> *"Universities now have a large degree of autonomy but they do not know what to do with it!" (Interview MD No. 6, 2016)*

The desire of Ministries to maintain control and be the ultimate decision-making agency, seems to lie at the bottom of the legislative framework which, although foreseeing autonomy for HEIs and buffer bodies such as Quality Assurance Agencies, seems to inform policy in a lot of areas.

Interestingly enough, the mutual distrust extends into many universities. Academic staff usually do not trust university leaders to safeguard their academic freedom, and are often themselves wary of greater university autonomy, as more autonomy to the institution would in effect mean greater power for rectors over them. As Johnstone and Bain have observed in the case of Russia, academic staff *"may resist a larger measure of autonomy […] if they perceive themselves or their jobs to be better protected by the ministry or the government than by their 'own' president, rector, or dean."* (Johnstone, B. & Bain,

2002). The same has been found by Sagintayeva & Kurakbayev (2015) for the case of Kazakh academics.

9.3.6.3 Lack of self-steering capacity of HEIs

During the Soviet period, academic autonomy of non-elite HEIs had been severely restricted. Curricula, text books, teaching materials, the format of assessment, etc. were centrally prepared and HEIs were expected to merely implement them. The only self-governance capacity HEIs needed was to organize time tables and room planning. The increased academic autonomy since the end of the Soviet period meant that HEIs had to develop the capacity to develop their own study plan, quality assurance mechanisms, including complex tasks such as critical self-reflection, strategy development, leadership, and management. The hierarchical approach to governance had centralized these functions within Ministries or elite HEIs. The growth of institutional autonomy presupposes that HEIs would need to develop these capacities themselves. For this, they are often ill-prepared.

In Moldova, as well as in rural regions of Russia and Kazakhstan, the majority of HEIs are too small and too poorly funded to become effective institutional actors. Their small size and precarious financial situation makes it difficult for them to employ and maintain the qualified staff necessary to develop the self-governance capacities required for broad university autonomy. In several cases, teaching staff are not paid living wages, forcing them to find a second or third source of income, often either in the private sector or through holding several concurrent positions at different HEIs. In the majority of cases, these conditions make regular staff development or research completely unrealistic.

In interviews, several representatives noted that HEI staff do often not understand how to properly develop study programs, based on the state standards. As a result, ministries do not trust in the capacity of universities and suspects (and, as accreditations carried out by EKKA and ARACIS in the case of Moldova confirmed) that many HEIs do not follow the normative framework. This, in turn, contributes to the view within the MoE that HEIs are not ready for autonomy and that if, HEIs were to be left to their own devices, a decline in quality and the end of a unified higher education system would inevitably follow. For the case of Kazakhstan, a 2017 OECD review found that many HEIs do not deviate from the standard study plans (OECD, 2017), even if they could. The report relates this to a lack of capacity on the side of HEIs to develop their own study programs, as well as to the tradition of top-down steering. As one researcher comments:

> *"I guess it is a part of path dependency. Universities are mostly used to do what was dictated by the ministry. So there is a standard and they develop their programs under the standards and that's it, I mean, they are ready to go. When we visited universities, you can say that the staff who are doctors and kandidaty nauk are mostly elder people who have defended their dissertations in Soviet times. There are few English-speaking young staff that could move along with*

the demand from outside. It is mostly related to the [lack of] capacity I think" (Interview KZ No. 2, 2017)

This is related to the rather low level of staff remuneration still prevalent at many public and private HEIs which makes the teaching profession unattractive to many graduates and forces many academics to accept very high teaching loads or take on additional employment elsewhere. The lack of capacity to invest in developing good study programs in some cases leads to detrimental effects on quality. As a Kazakh higher education researcher recounts:

"Electives came out of nowhere, they were developed, just so that there are electives. This is linked to capacity and professional development of teachers. Now universities have the autonomy to develop their own programs, but the staff at department level does not have the capacity, they don't know what to do. (Interview KZ No. 2, 2017)

Recognizing the lack of capacity for self-governance in some HEIs, one may argue that the detailed regulations in the code of education, limiting academic, staff, and organizational autonomy, are adaptive in the sense that they standardize and regulate a fragmented higher education system of HEIs which are unable to internalize these functions due to a lack of the necessary financial and human resources.

9.3.6.4 The appeal of historical models of higher education

In contrast to Russia or other Eastern-European post-socialist countries, neither Kazakhstan nor Moldova had a pre-communist tradition of higher education that could have provided an attractive model of governance to aspire to return to. Neither Moldova nor Kazakhstan had hosted centers of of academic excellence in the Soviet Union. For the majority of Moldovans who identified with Romania, joining the EHEA was mostly seen as a "return to Europe". In Kazakhstan, the goal of becoming a part of the wider world and adopting "best practices" outweighed the identification with the Soviet model of higher education.

In Russia, however, the idea of the Soviet system of education providing 'the best education in the world' was widespread among the conservative elites in HEIs. The notion that the system was not in need of any reform, but just of better funding (which found strong proponents in the Russian Union of Rectors) stood in direct opposition to adopting "foreign" practices. In no country was the Bologna Process met with heavier resistance than in Russia, where it was labeled a form of "Western educational imperialism". The decision to join the process anyway was therefore made by the political elite against the will of the academic elite which long continued to resist it (Tomusk, 2007). Since the predominant narrative in universities had it that despite of a severe lack of funding, Russian higher education was still of superb quality, the majority of HEI leaders saw little reason to actually implement the Bologna Process's action lines, or other "Western" practices. In Russia, it was the "ranking shock" of the early 2000s (when only one Russian university even figured among the best 100 HEIs worldwide) which first had a profound effect on the Russian elite universities, who found themselves far from being the leaders

near the bottom of league tables or absent altogether. The true shift in perspective took place among the universities participating in the various excellence programs, and the HEIs imitating them, with the hope of joining. The added funding these HEIs received, the accountability to develop university development plans, and the funding to implement them, has led to a change in thinking among elite HEIs.

What becomes notable in the case of Kazakhstan, is its openness to international advice and deliberate imports of international governance models. Their influence was highlighted by a senior policy expert who noted on the topic of system governance:

> *"By the way, when international experts started to visit us in the late 1990s, already then, they started telling us that we are too organized, that the system is too centralized. They told us this really often when they compared [systems of higher education]. They told this to us, to Russia, and to China, and to other Central Asian states. […] This has had an influence"* (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).

As to the motivations for joining OECD and founding the Information-Analytical Center, a leading employee described:

> *"Well, it's a question of prestige, of course, for politicians... But you know what's important: Here are 35 OECD countries, which are considered to be the club of the best countries. You can think for yourself how effective it is to study each experience, each country separately somehow, from various sources, or to be able to participate in these committee meetings twice a year, to be able to communicate with them face to face, in one place, to prepare documents, to participate in the discussions, and to have the opportunity to understand the ongoing trends. We have already realized how great this is. Because our employees went and participated in one meeting 2015. Just then the question was discussed here is the initiative of [Andreas] Schleicher education 2020. These mega competencies. And they brought such a package of very valuable documents. That is, here, what is born in the bowels of the OECD, of course, it is more effective to see this immediately there. And to communicate with experts in one place. Well, that's what this explanation seems to me.*
>
> *Although of course there is prestige for the country. But more importantly, we have recently been actively engaging in benchmarking in Kazakhstan. You must have noticed. We look at foreign experience. So now for us it is very important for us to see how things are done in the best countries, and to do it like this. In order to understand your place. Because for a long time we did not have this opportunity." (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017).*

For Kazakhstan, the orientation at international models helped it to cast itself as the leader in its geographical neighborhood:

"If we compare how Kazakhstan is promoting these reforms with what is going on in Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan, then we can clearly see how serious we are taking this. Of course in the implementation there are then further difficulties but we manage and the country is learning" (Interview KZ No. 11, 2017)

"In general, in comparison to Germany, in Kazakhstan and the entire post-Soviet space is that ministries have more of a controlling function. But now related with the introduction of independent accreditation, this control function is slowly receding from the MoES. This is a really difficult process, believe me. But this path is not present in Uzbekistan, in Kyrgyzstan, in Tajikistan, in Turkmenistan. Our independent agencies can and will control quality" (Interview KZ No. 11, 2017)

10 Discussion and Outlook

The extensive review of the three case studies and the cross-country comparison has made clear that the isomorphic pressures of the "global model" of governance practices have exerted and continue to exert a considerable influence in each of the studied cases. The governance instruments promoted by OECD, WB and the EU are clearly recognizable in the 2015 governance arrangements in all three case countries.

On the instruments-level, a process of convergence towards the "global model" is clearly visible. At the same time, this convergence does not represent a displacement of previous governance arrangements but rather a *layering* of new instruments and structures upon core features of a post-Soviet model of governance which all three countries share.

How can these developments be explained? A key postulate of ***isomorphism*** according to DiMaggio & Powell (1983) is that systems adopt changes in order to gain or maintain legitimacy. This aspect is clearly visible in each country case: Russia uses global rankings to measure the effect of her investments in 'world class' research universities. Kazakhstan adopts OECD-recommendations and implements the Bologna Process in order to be 'on the map' globally. Moldova follows European policies in higher education in order to 'join Europe' and continue to profit from European funding. Yet the interplay of global, regional, and national polities, entities or organizations which has promoted, shaped and impeded changes is far more complex than that.

During the 1990ies, the three studied countries had to cope with ***similar challenges***. This fact, and the fact that they share a number of distinct ***interrelated cultural and institutional features*** such as a ***hierarchical mental model of governance***, a general ***lack of trust between actors***, and a ***lack of self-steering capacity of HEIs*** may help to explain how the similarities identified as the "Post-Soviet Model" have emerged and were maintained.

Characteristics of the ***actors promoting the change*** provide further insights. In both Russia and Kazakhstan, the main driving forces behind the changes are the state organs acting in alignment with supporting institutions for this change: The swift adoption of OECD-recommended policies in Kazakhstan would not be imaginable without presidential support for "Westernizing" reforms in the entire country, but also not without other vectors of influence such as returning Bolashak scholarship holders and, since 2009, the activities of Nazarbayev University. In Russia, influential national institutions such as the Higher School of Economics (HSE), the Centre for Strategic Initiatives, and the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO promoted and supported the adoption of new governance mechanisms by an increasingly assertive "power vertical". In contrast, in Moldova, national-level factors such as political instability, and weak state institutions, underfunding, nepotism, and the high degree of interdependence between individuals have stifled the capacity of the higher education system to change and has led to a

gridlock between actors. This gridlock somewhat eased since the early 2010s, when EU-supported policies and funding came to shape the development trajectory of the country, although changes so far remain superficial.

In all three countries, a key feature of the Soviet model of governance has thus remained: The centrality of the state in steering and managing the development higher education system.

The more things change, the more they stay the same then?

Yes and no. It seems that the activities of international actors towards promoting the 'global model' of university governance may actually have reinforced the power of the state. Firstly, by engaging in transnational influence on policy-making, international actors such as the OECD, the World Bank and the European commission typically address the nation-state as the legitimate actor in higher education reform. Through making perceived shortcomings visible via international comparisons, or via obligations from having entered international agreements such as the Bologna Process, transnational actors actually provide legitimacy to the nation state (Krücken et al., 2007). This is certainly happening in the case countries: International rankings and the promotion of "best practices" by organizations such as the OECD and the World Bank create legitimacy for the state to actively redistribute and focus funding into the top tier of HE systems and prospective "world class research universities", or to establish evaluative systems for monitoring HEIs through new systems of quality assurance. Secondly, the steering instruments promoted by the global model (such as the monitoring of performance indicators upon which funding and administrative measures can be based, expanding the power of HEI leaders at the expense of academics) provide a much more effective way of steering the system[97]. This finding is most visible in the case of Russia which is adopting indicator-based performance measures for steering the HE system to a much larger degree than any Western European countries. It may well be that the NPM-inspired instruments were so quickly adopted in Russia precisely because they coincide so well with the existing authoritarian assumptions that an HEsystem should legitimately be steered from the hierarchical center.

[97] Without making any statement about the quality of output and outcomes of HEIs thus steered.

10.1 Concluding reflections on the contribution of this study to the field of research

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY. The present study provides, for the first time, a comprehensive overview of the changing governance of three post-Soviet higher education systems. By guiding the analysis with a common analytical- thematic framework, it is one of the few studies that has attempted a systematic comparison across such are large time span: 25 years of change. I have tried to re-trace global, European, and national-level factors and influences on these changes and to contextualize events in the complex interplay of these factors and influences. I have tried to contribute to a differentiated understanding of the factors driving, shaping and impeding changes, which too often are reduced to single factors of influence, such as the Bologna Process. Finally, the study may be of interest to HE researchers or policy-makers trying to make sense of the evolution of higher education in the post-Soviet space in a cross-national comparative perspective.

AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH. Due to the scope of the project, it is inevitable that issues could not receive the attention they might deserve. Clearly, each of the theoretical perspectives employed in this study could be individually pursued in greater depth in further studies. Each of the individual thematic dimensions included in this study would merit more a detailed analysis. By trying to consider the wider policy-context of the study, I hope to have contributed to laying the ground for such work.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS. This study has tried to avoid taking a normative stance and has attempted to approach the subject of governance from a perspective of understanding the multi-causal "why" and "how" of changes, rather than the justification or merit of individual policy changes. This study, as others before it, has shown that new policies or institutions almost never replace previous ones, but are layered on top of each other. Indeed, even where policy recommendations are closely implemented into law, in their implementation they interact with local realities and institutions leading to conflict and contradiction. Where this occurs, more often than not, the status quo prevails. Policy change is more likely to be effective where it is supported by glonacal forces aligning to create pressure and legitimacy of change, as well as by changing mental models of actors within the system. The lesson for policy entrepreneurs is then to invest more time and work into a deep understanding of the different national institutional contexts, and the objectives and values of the actors shaping the respective governance system and to develop a holistic approach to change.

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12 Annexes

12.1 Annex 1: Russia - The governance of the higher education system

12.1.1 Russia: Structure of the higher education system

12.1.1.1 Structure of Educational programs

Study programs are divided into professional "*specialties*" (*Special'nosti*), which are further divided into "*specializations*" (*Specializacii*), such as specialty engineering, specialization thermal power engineering. Specialist (*Specialist),* Master (*Magistr*) and Bachelor (*Bakalavr*) study programs are grouped into study areas and study fields (*Napravlenija*). All study programs are assigned an identification number and name. Study programs of the same study area have the same ID number. The *State Standards for higher education* define contents and structure for study areas (see below). Among other aspects, the standards centrally regulate the number of hours by contact hours, seminar work; student work load, the length of internships, thesis writing and examinations; contents of study programs divided into 1) foundation studies/core courses 2) basic professional courses 3) specialized courses. Generally speaking, foundation studies/core courses constitute the major part of the curriculum during the first 2 years, with basic professional and specialization subjects beginning in the third year. Core course requirements are the same for all specializations within the same study area.

12.1.1.2 Differentiation of the higher education system

The Russian Federation boasts a rather large number of both public and private HEIs. In addition, many of them have branches (*filialy*) across the country and abroad, mostly in CIS countries. Apart from national HEIs, there are HEIs funded and regulated by the RF's regions and municipalities. The official classification of HEIs distinguishes institutes (*instituty*), academies (*akademii*) and universities (*universitety*). Universities offer a wide range of programs in many disciplines. Academies are specialized HEIs which offer study programs in specific domains. Institutes train specialists in a specific profession.

12.1.1.3 Size and growth of the higher education system

In the beginning of the 1990ies, the collapse of the Russian economy and the subsequent crisis of the state budget and subsequent budget cuts to HEIs, left them scrambling to cover even their day-to-day expenses (Motova, 2015). The economic contraction after the break-up of the Soviet Union, especially in the area of engineering and the declining salaries led to a devaluation of these skills, a loss of interest in their studies and a pronounced brain-drain by emigration or changes of profession. During the early 1990ies, this led to a decline in interest in higher education, as prospective students and their parents regarded higher education as out-of-date, expensive and irrelevant for the new capitalist society

(Adrian et al., 2000, p. 30). Between the late 1980ies and 1994-1995, enrollment numbers were actually declining. The decline in student numbers sharply reversed in the middle of the 1990ies, when high unemployment made gainful employment difficult and it became clear that higher education, especially in the new and prestigious areas such as economics and law represented a strong positional good on the labor market. HEIs tried to cope with the changing environment and the dramatic decrease in funding by opening new study programs in areas with the highest consumer demand and employment prospects for graduates (mostly social sciences, IT, and foreign languages), by expanding evening and correspondence courses, and by establishing branches in other regions and localities (Kuzminov et al., 2015).

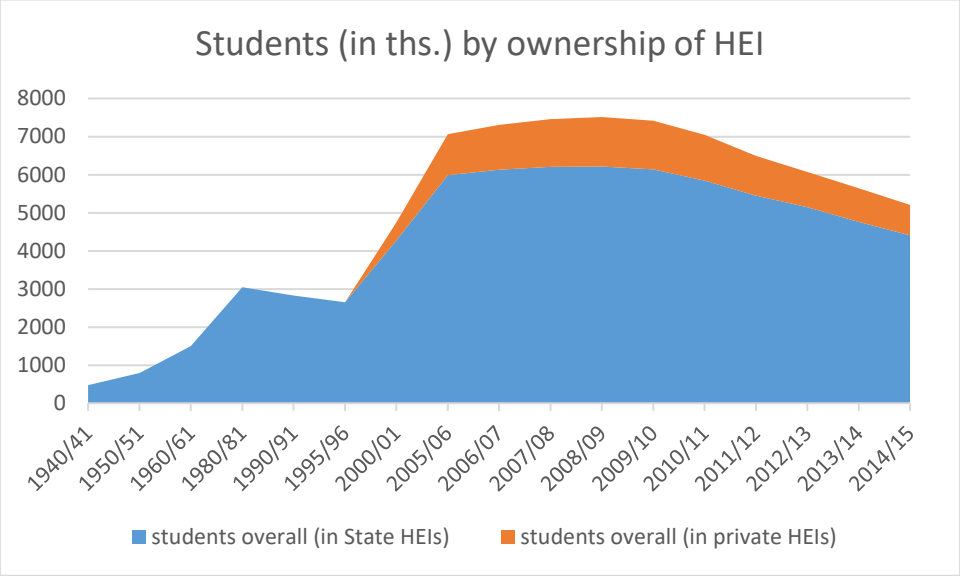

Figure 16: Number of students enrolled in public and private HEIs

The 1990ies saw a tremendous expansion of both enrollment as well as the number of HEIs. A number of formerly dependent "branches" of HEIs became independent HEIs in their own right. In addition, the numbers of new branches soared: While in 1993, state HEIs had less than 200 branches, in 2008, this number reached 2,096 (Motova & Navodnov, 2009).

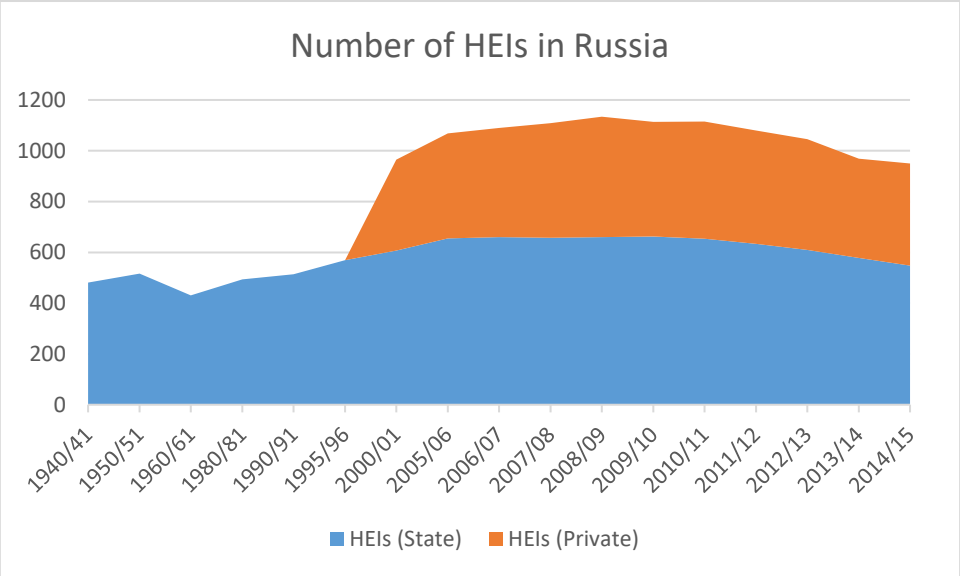

Figure 17: Number of HEIs in Russia

The relatively liberal regulation regarding existing HEIs for expanding enrollment and establishing branches as well as the establishment of new HEIs led to an unprecedented growth of the HEI system. At their peak in 2005, in Russia, there were 2201 branches of public and private universities.

In total, since 1990, the number of HEIs doubled (from 600 to over 1200). while the number of students enrolled in HE tripled from 2,5 million to 7,8 million (Motova, 2015). A similar expansion happened in the number of study programs (which rose from 10.200 to 32.500), especially in the social sciences. Most new study programs were opened in this area, both because they did not require a large investment in infrastructure and facilities as well as because the new market economy had a much larger demand for economist and lawyers. On the other hand, student demand for the teaching, medical and engineering professions dropped.

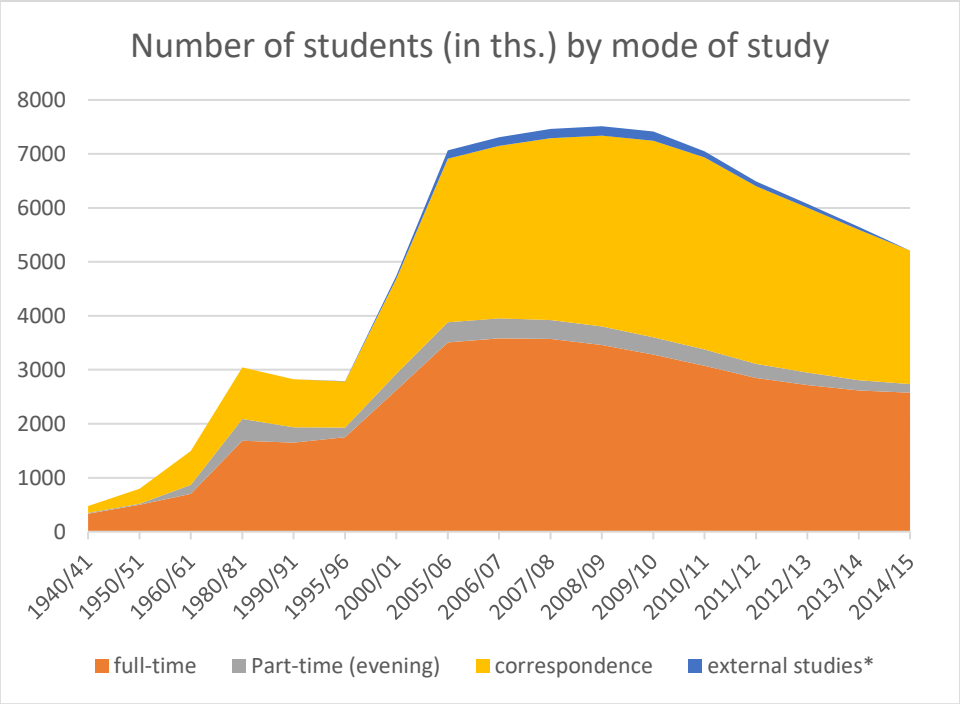

Figure 18: Number of students by mode of study

As higher education degrees became more common and of more heterogeneous quality, their value on the labor market changed. Increasingly, employers made having a higher education degree a general prerequisite for hiring, which further increased the pressure to obtain any higher education qualifications. This fueled not only corruption in university admissions, but also contributed to the growth of low-quality HEIs and the enormous rise in part-time and correspondence students. In the eyes of many observers, the massive expansion had negative repercussions on the quality of the system (Motova & Pykkö, 2012). Not only were new programs set up primarily in "cheap" and popular disciplines such as economics, law and the humanities. These new programs were often staffed by academics teaching simultaneously at one or several other HEIs. The classification of HEIs also changed in an inflationary manner. In 1992, HEIs received the right to determine their own denominations, as a consequence of which the classical distinction of universities, academies and institutes lost its meaning. Whereas in the Soviet Union, there had been only one classical universities per city and only in large cities, their number rose six-fold, the number of academies by a factor of 30 (Motova, 2015).

After 2006, the trend towards expansion and massification of the higher education system started to gradually reverse, beginning with small, low-prestige private universities, and since 2007 also in the public sector (Abankina, I. et al., 2016). An important background factor for understanding the dynamics of higher education dynamics is demography. Natalist policies in the 1980ies had led to rising fertility rates, which decreased again after 1988. This affected the overall size of the student population, by the end of 1990s (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018).

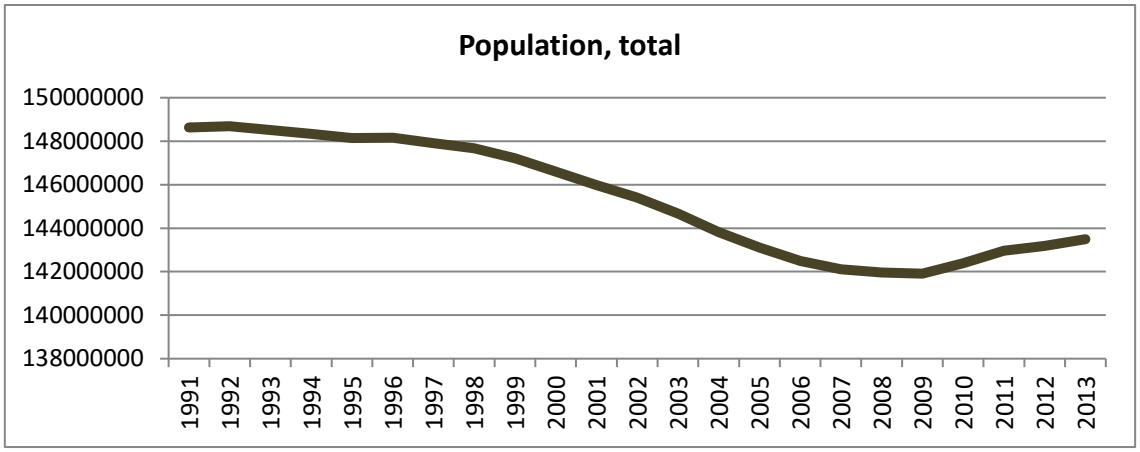

Figure 19: Population of Russia 1991-2013. *Source:* (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018)

The two main reasons for this decline in demand for higher education were the general demographic decline on the one hand, and the financial and economic crisis since 2008 on the other (Abankina, I. et al., 2016). Since then, there has been a process of consolidation in the numbers of students and, in consequence, HEIs.

12.1.2 Actors and their capabilities

12.1.2.1 State actors

The Russian system of government is characterized by a duality of the government on the one hand, and the Presidential administration on the other.[98] The Russian president, as a popularly elected head of the state, appoints (and dismisses) the Government. The president can set a policy agenda, and overturn or change any of the prime minister's decisions by issuing decrees (*ukazy* and *porucheniya*) obliging the government to implement them. The Russian institutional set-up therefore relegates the government to policy-making in secondary areas and to performing technical, routine, and administrative functions, especially in areas in which the president has taken an interest.

To maintain its policy-making capacity vis-à-vis the government, the Presidential administration duplicates many ministry capacities. The President, as well as the ministries and the Duma maintain a series of advisory councils on a number of issues, staffed with figures representing the professional communities. The Presidential Administration maintains staff to oversee the implementation of presidential decrees. The conflict and competition often emerging from these two poles of policy-making represents a form of opinion pluralism which creates a degree of opposition in an otherwise effectively (if not in name and appearance) single-party political system (Interview RU No. 9, 2017).

[98] For a detailed analysis of the Russian institutional design and its consequences for policy-making and the various principal-agents problems of this institutional arrangement see Gel'man & Starodubtsev (2016)

The administration of the president of the Russian Federation can thus be described as the strategic "power core" of the higher education system. As one former high-ranking public official describes:

> *"I am not saying that they [the presidential administration] designed and ran everything. But the signal, that the country's leadership thinks that we should move in this direction, sets the development vector, which is formulated in the yearly presidential address in front of the Federal parliament. After this the government and the ministries start their work in the realization of these instructions […]. Already in Soviet times it was like this" (Interview RU No. 3, 2015)*

Regarding higher education, aside from presidential orders, *state strategies*, which define priorities and directions, and *federal programs of education development (federalnye programmy razvitiya obrazovaniya)* are important instruments by which the government plans the mid- and long-term policy in the area of education. These programs are significant primarily because they are realized with a dedicated budget for their implementation. The Ministry of Education of responsible for administrating and executing these programs and reports to the Presidential administration and to the State Duma.

The initiator of new legislation is typically the Minister of Education who (with or without a presidential order or recommendation of one of the presidential committees) initiates the drafting of new legislation within the ministry. As in other authoritarian states (Gandhi, 2010), parliament and political parties perform only a secondary role in decision-making. The legislation is discussed and passed by Duma and the Federation Council, but rarely ever opposed. As one former member of the government explained:

> *"What can the Duma do? Amendments to the law go through the Duma, but these amendments need to be coordinated with the government. If the government says that it does not support an amendment, in 99% of the cases, the Duma will block it. This is why the Duma is at this moment not independent, because [the state party] United Russia supports both the president and the head of the government". […] "The real centers of power are the ministry and the government" (Interview RU No. 14, 2017)*

An additional characteristic of the Russian political culture is the important role of personal relationships between key actors. Personal loyalty is highly valued and drives many decisions of appointment of key personnel. This begins with the government which is nominated by the president (in formal coordination with the Duma) but extends downwards throughout the political and administrative hierarchy. It is very typical for the Russian political system that when the minister or the head of an agency is replaced, the incoming person replaces all of the key positions with personnel of his or her own choosing. While this helps to assure loyalty within organizations and sub-units, it has obvious negative repercussions for continuity and preserving organizational knowledge, which is lost in each transition. The low personnel continuity within institutions makes policy-making highly dependent on fluctuating relationships between the individuals heading the key institutions, such as the Minister of Education and Science, the chairman of the Duma Committee on Education, and the head of the education section of the Presidential

Administration and the head, as well as their individual access to the Presidential Administration and the President (Interview RU No. 14, 2017).

The following actors play important roles in the governance of the Russian system of higher education:

RF Ministry of Education and Science *(Ministerstvo obrazovaniya i nauki Rossiyskoy Federatsii* - MoES)[99] and other RF ministries

Since Soviet times, most State HEIs still fall under jurisdiction of 24 federal ministries. The majority of HEIs are affiliated to the RF Ministry of Education and Science (337 HEI), followed by the Ministry of Agriculture (58 HEI), the Ministry of Health and Social Development (47), the Ministry of Culture and Mass Communications (44). In addition, eight ministries are in charge of two higher education institutions each (EACEA, 2012c).

The Ministry of Education and Science establishes State Education Standards and formulates the general policy on education, including financial policy for all HEIs. Implementation of some aspects is delegated to regional education administrations (departments, Ministries or committees) and HEIs, which have significant autonomy to adopt their own regulations. Regional parliaments can adopt further legislation to align the activities of HEIs to regional needs (EACEA, 2012c).

The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for drafting and implementing government policy and legal regulation in the field of education, science, research and development and related innovation activities, nanotechnology, development of national research and high technology centers, national research centers and academic towns, intellectual property, as well as guardianship and custody of minors, social assistance, social security for students, youth policy, and state services and state property management in the field of education, upbringing, science, research and development and related innovation activities. It has existed in its current form since 2004 after a merger of the Ministry of Education (*Ministerstvo obrazovaniya*) and the Ministry of Industry, Science and Technologies (*Ministerstvo promyshlennosti, nauki I tekhnologii*).

While ministers during the 1990ies had a relatively short tenure, between 1998 and 2016, three ministers significantly shaped the work of the ministry:

Vladimir Mikhailovich Filippov was Minister of Education of the Russian Federation in 1998–2004. Before his appointment, he served as Rector of Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. In 2001, he presented the program "*Modernization of Russian education until the year 2010*" which foresaw the introduction of the Unified State Exam, the introduction of targeted enrollment in universities, increased support for university dormitories, a new stratification of HEIs, into different categories of leading universities and the elaboration of a new generation of State educational standards. Filippov also lobbied for and achieved Russia's accession to the Bologna Process in 2003.

[99] http://xn--80abucjiibhv9a.xn--p1ai/

Andrei Alexandrovich Fursenko, a physicist and businessman, served as minister between 2004-2012. Before his appointment as minister, between 2001 and 2003 he had served as Deputy Minister of Industry, Science and Technology. The most notable milestones during his tenure were the introduction of the Unified State Examination, the establishment of Federal Universities, the Research university program as well as a program to fund attracting high profile international researchers to Russian HEIs.

In 2012, Fursenko was succeeded by *Dmitry Viktorovich Livanov*, rector of the National University of Science and Technology (MISIS) who had been Fursenko's deputy from 2005 to 2007. In the time between 2012 and 2015 the struggle over low-quality higher education institutions became one of the major priorities for policy-makers. In 2016, Livanov was replaced by Olga Vasileva.

Federal Inspection Service for Education and Science (*Federal'naya sluzhba po nadzoru I kontrolyu v sfere obrazovaniya i nauki* - Rosobnadzor)[100]

According to the Russian legislation, *Rosobnadzor* is the federal executive power body, overseeing the education system. *Rosobrnadzor* emerged in 2004 from the former *Department of Licensing, Accreditation and Attestation* and other state bodies. Among its tasks are the process of state licensing and accreditation, monitoring of the HE system, and conducting the Unified State exam.

Formally, the tasks of Rosobrnadzor in the sphere of higher education are the control of compliance with legal norms, of licensing requirements, and of quality. Rosobnadzor is the only body that may award state accreditation certificates. It has delegated most of the practical operation to its subsidiary agency, the *National Accreditation Agency*, which is responsible for conducting the state accreditation procedure and preparing the analytical report to the Accreditation Board (ENQA, 2014a). The *Accreditation Board* is another advisory body attached to Rosobrnadzor which issues recommendations on accreditation. Its membership consists of representatives of HEIs leaderships, employers and students' organizations. The board is chaired by the head of Rosobrnadzor, and the vice-chair of the board is the deputy head of Rosobrnadzor. Decisions taken by the board have the formal status of recommendations to Rosobnadzor. These recommendations are then considered by an *Accreditation Collegium* consisting of senior officials from Rosobrnadzor (ENQA, 2014a). The board meets 6 times a year. 8 of the 16 members of the Accreditation Commission are representatives from NAA (ENQA, 2014a). Rosobnadzor retains all final decision-making rights, the approval of the criteria for state accreditation as well as for individual decisions on the nomination of experts and final accreditations. Since 2004, licensing and accreditation of HEIs have increasingly been transformed from a relatively toothless procedure in the hand of a relatively independent accreditation agency into powerful instruments of state steering and control in the hands of Rosobnadzor and, by extension, the Ministry of Education (Interview RU No. 14, 2017).

[100] http://www.obrnadzor.gov.ru/

Predecessor organizations were the Research and Information Centre of State Accreditation (*Nauchno-informatsionnyy tsentr gosudarstvennoy akkreditatsii* – 1995, founded in Yoshkar-Ola) which assisted HEIs in preparing for accreditation and the *Informational-methodological analysis center (Informatsionno-metodicheskiy tsentr analiza* – 2001, founded in Shakhty*),* which reviewed courses in terms of their compliance with the State Education Standards, before becoming part of Rosobrnadzor in 2004.

National Accreditation Agency (*Federal'noye gosudarstvennoye byudzhetnoye uchrezhdeniye «Natsional'noye akkreditatsi-onnoye agentstvo v sfere obrazovaniya» NAA (FBGU «Rosakkreda-gentstvo»*)

Under the influence of the Bologna Process, in 2005, the previous the Research and Information Centre of State Accreditation was renamed into the National Accreditation Agency emerged from (Chistokhvalov, 2007).

Until 2009[101] NAA was responsible for collecting and processing information about the HEIs which have to undergo state licensing and accreditation. To do so, NAA maintained the "Central Database of State Accreditation" (CDSA), which contained information about the activity of higher education institutions, secondary vocational education and training institutions and institutions of further professional education. NAA collected information for the Database via a specially developed software. According to NAA's website, the database contained information about the activities of 1416 HEIs and 2127 branches, 2945 sVET institutions and 730 branches, 349 institutions of further professional education and 73 branches. The data was used for the preparation of final reports for the Accreditation Board.

NAA organizes the site visits during the process of **state accreditation**. The site visits are conducted, however, exclusively by experts without the presence of NAA staff (ENQA, 2014a). Since 2009, NAA is also responsible for **selecting experts for external evaluation panels**. This is done by random selection for each panel (ENQA, 2014a). For this purpose, NAA maintains a pool of experts comprising of over 2300 people (NAA, 2015a). Before being admitted to the pool, experts need to be certified by Rosobrnadzor (ENQA, 2014a). To qualify experts, NAA conducts monthly training seminars which are a prerequisite for experts to participate in reviews. Upon completion of the training, participants are assessed through a test and an interview. According to ENQA (2014a) only around 60 % of candidates pass the certification test. All experts who participate in state accreditations have to be accredited by Rosobrnadzor (ENQA, 2014a).

Between 2005-2009, NAA also conducted the assessment of student learning outcomes in terms of their compliance to the requirements of the State Educational Standards – SES. This was done via computer testing[102].

[101] Since 2009, any data collection is centralized within the MoES. HEIs now provide data exclusively to the MoES
[102] Since 2009, HEIs prepare their own tests to verify the learning outcomes which are then also used during state accreditation procedures

NAA is a member of the following networks INQAAHE (full membership since 2001); CEENQA (full membership since 2002); APQN (full membership since 2006); EAQAN (full membership since 2004); IAEA (full membership since 2007); ENQA (full membership since 2009). According to the 2014 ENQA review, NAA has 13 structural units (12 departments and one branch) with a total of 101 staff. The 2013 budget was 88 million rubles (at the time ~EUR 1.8 million), while the budget of 2014 was increased to 270 million rubles (~EUR 5,3 million), which partly reflects the fact the expert fees had not been part of NAAs budget before (ENQA, 2014a). NAA is a non-profit organization but has the right to carry out for-profit consultancy activities as long as these remain compliant with the statutory purpose of the agency.

Main State Center for Education Evaluation / National Information Center (*Glavnyy gosudarstvennyy ekspertnyy tsentr otsenki obrazovaniya", FGBNU „Glaveksperttsentr“)*

The center was established in 1997 by the Ministry of Education. In 2005, it was transferred to Rosobrnadzor. On behalf of Rosobrnadzor, the center collects and provides information on international academic degrees and qualifications and assesses them for equivalence to degrees and titles of the Russian Federation. The formal decision on recognition is taken by Rosobrnadzor. A number of HEIs have the legal powers to recognize foreign qualifications without the involvement of the Center[103]. This concerns mostly National Research Universities and Federal Universities. The Center is the Russian member of the ENIC-NARIC network.

Higher Attestation Commission (*Vysshaya attestatsionnaya komissiya* – VAK)

The VAK controls the awarding of advanced academic degrees for all Russian HEIs with the exception of Moscow and Saint Petersburg State Universities (since 2008). Among its tasks is the coordination of dissertation councils in Russian universities and research institutes; promulgating regulations concerning awarding of academic degrees; awarding the degrees of Candidate of Sciences and Doctor of Sciences, upon the recommendation of the Dissertation Council in the university or research institute where the defense of the dissertation took place; awarding the academic rank of Professor; and taking decisions on equivalence of foreign degrees awarded to Russian citizens. The role of the VAK has practically remained constant since the break-up of the Soviet Union.

12.1.2.2 (Semi-)public Agencies

State-public Associations (*gosudarstvenno-obshchestvennyye ob"yedineniya*)

A special feature of the Russian HE system is that the government itself sets up a number of non-governmental organizations, dubbed "state-public" associations or organizations (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). According to the *Law of the Russian Federation On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education*

[103] For a list consult http://www.nic.gov.ru/en/proc/other

(1996), state administrative bodies are to a) consider the recommendations of these organizations as well as to b) render them support, including financial support. Among these are creative unions, professional associations, scientific and other societies, research associations, teaching and methodological associations, and various councils and commissions with both a Federal as well as a regional scope. Membership in these organizations is voluntary yet prestigious since they partake in shaping HE policy.

Teaching and methodological associations (*Uchebno-metodicheskoye ob"yedineniye obrazovatel'nykh organizatsiy* - UMO)

Among state-public organizations, the *teaching and methodological associations (UMOs)* play a particular role in quality assurance. The UMOs are associations of universities offering study programs with a similar profile. For example, there are UMOs for medical, pedagogical, or agricultural study areas (*napravleniye*)[104]. Their membership is composed of representatives of HEIs, enterprises and quality assurance bodies. UMOs exist for different academic fields. They were first established in the 1980ies. Between 2001 and 2015, the number of UMOs grew from around twenty in 2001 (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001) to 80 in 2015. The UMO play a key role in the development of the federal educational standards (FSES) with all associated documents for different levels of post-secondary education. In addition, they develop programs of training and retraining of the teaching staff, conduct certifications for the awarding of the academic titles of professor ("*professor*") and associate professor ("*dotsent*"), they review textbooks and manuals, and organize events on higher and postgraduate professional education for staff and students.

They are, however, founded by the ministry, presided over by ministry staff and their members are chosen by the ministry. This makes them and other such councils maintained by the Ministry of education semi-independent sources of input to be considered at the leisure of the Ministry:

> *"Who becomes a member in the organizations? People who were nominated by the Ministry. I can always choose people who are comfortable to me, who will tell me that [what I am doing is] good. In this sense, the professional-public accreditation, societal [advisory] councils which are being founded, as a matter of fact, what kind of societal representation is that when I decide myself whom to include?" (Interview RU No. 14, 2017)*

In order to coordinate the activities of the state-public organizations, a Coordination Council composed of the Vice-Chairpeople of all associations and councils, methodological and research organizations as well as of representatives of the Ministry of Education was established. The Coordination Council formulates goals and organizes working groups and commissions for particular tasks (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001).

Center for Strategic Studies (*Tsentr strategicheskikh razrabotok*)

[104] Since 2015, only individuals, not HEIs can become UMO members.

The Center for Strategic Studies was founded in 1999 under the government of the Russian Federation as a think tank to advise the government on economic policy. It is most famous for designing the economic reforms of the 2000ies but continues to coordinate the strategies for economic development, among which is the human capital strategy, which lays out development and investment priorities for higher education.

National Training Foundation (NFPK) (*Natsional'nyy fond podgotovki kadrov*)

The National Training Foundation (NFPK) was founded in 1994 and conducts research, monitoring of government programs, consulting, and project coordination of projects related to the development of higher education. NFPK is also responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the Bologna process and for coordinating all work in this field (decree no. 40 of the Russian Ministry of Education of 15 February 2005)" (Chistokhvalov, 2007). Among other projects, the NFPK has developed the monitoring for the 5/100 program. It acts as a think tank for the MoES and others.

12.1.2.3 Professional organizations

There are a number professional organizations which are independent of the State, but only few who are interested in getting involved in setting and enforcing standards for educational programs in Russia (Interview RU No. 3, 2015). These are the Russian Rectors Union, associations of HEIs and employer organizations, as well as organizations offering professional-public accreditation.

Russian Rectors' Union and other associations of HEIs

The Russian Rectors' Union was established in 1992 and represents the rectors of both state and non-state HEIs. It has its own legal personality and organizes itself independent of the Government. It acts as a lobbying body primarily in issues of academic freedom, university autonomy, the economics of higher education, and the social protection of students and university teaching staff (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). It became a very powerful organization during the 1990ies, but its influence waned during the 2000s and 2010s. The MoES usually consults the Rectors' Union on important questions and legislative initiatives.

There are several other associations of HEIs. The biggest is the *Association of Russian Higher Education Institutions* (set up in 1992 with a current membership of 400). Smaller associations based on disciplinary focus or ownership such as *the Association of Engineering Education* (founded in 1993 with a current membership of 100 higher education institutions); *the Eurasian Association of Universities* (established in 1989 and including fifty-three classical universities in Russia and in other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Baltic countries); the *Association of Civil Engineering Higher Education Institutions* (founded in 1993 and currently comprising more than 100 higher education institutions from all the CIS countries); the *Association of Technical Universities* (founded in 1992 and now comprising 90 technical universities); the *Association of Russian Non-State Higher Education Institutions*

(established in the framework of the Association of Russian Higher Education Institutions) (Interview RU No. 14, 2017; Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). These associations are self-organized and act as lobbying bodies for their members, with various degree of access to the Ministry.

Employer organizations

Employer organizations include the *Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP)*[105], *Delovaya Rossia*[106] and *Opora Rossii*[107] (Chistokhvalov, 2007). The *Russian Trilateral Commission for the regulation of social and labor relations* is a government commission to coordinate legislation with trade union associations and national employers' unions. Contrary to the Russian Rectors Union and the various associations of HEIs who any formally guaranteed powers do not have, employer organizations play a somewhat more direct role. Employer organizations are represented in a dedicated *council on qualifications under the President of the Russian Federation*. The participation of *Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (RSPP)* is mandatory in the development of state education standards.

Organizations of public-professional accreditation

Public-professional accreditation has been mentioned in the Russian laws on education since 1992. It bears no relation to state accreditation and does not grant any official privileges. There are possibly hundreds of accreditation agencies online which are not discernable from "accreditation mills" in that they do not seem to represent any particular constituency (Interview RU No. 3, 2015). A small number of agencies, which have gained a degree of recognition nationally and internationally. They did not play any significant role for the governance of the system, since only very few HEIs use their services and their accreditation does only in a few isolated cases have an effect on reputation, usually in connection to global quality seals for certain technical professions (Interview RU No. 3, 2015). In 2002, the **association of engineering education (AIOR)** was founded as the first independent accreditation agency. It was joined in 2005 by the ***Agency for education quality control and career development (Agency for Quality Control and Career Development – AKKORK)***, a not-for-profit organization established by two limited liability companies named "*Obrazovanie cherez vsu zhizn*" (Lifelong learning) and "*Garantii kachestva*" (Quality assurance) and supported by an annual subsidy (ENQA, 2015). AKKORK offers public accreditation, evaluations and audits on behalf of "*Opora Rossii*" (All-Russian NGO representing small and medium-sized businesses), the *Russian Engineering Union*, the *Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers*, the *Association of Russian Managers* and the *Russian Academy of Education* (ENQA, 2015). The ***National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA),*** a non-profit organization offering public accreditation, was established in 2009 by former staff of the national accreditation agency (NAC) when it was moved from Yoshkar-Ola to Moscow. NCPA was founded by the *Guild of Experts, the journal 'Accreditation in Education', the Centre for training and Consultancy and Scientific and*

[105] http://rspp.ru
[106] http://www.deloros.ru/
[107] http://opora.ru

Research, and the Institute of the Education Quality Monitoring who are members of the organizations' board. The *National Accreditation Board* (NAB) is responsible for granting accreditation within the processes of NCPA. It is composed of representatives of legislative bodies of the Russian Federation, Rectors and Presidents of the Russian leading HEIs, prominent scholars, and representatives of professional and student associations (ENQA, 2014b). Its 25 members are appointed by the *National Conference of the Guild of Experts*. By 2017, NCPA had become a full member of INQAAHE, ENQA, APQN, CEENQA and was officially listed in EQAR.

Guild of Experts and Association "Rosakkreditatsiya"

The "Guild of Experts" was founded in June of 2006 by experts that had undergone training on processes of external reviews in accreditation processes (Chistokhvalov, 2007). Its foundation had been supported by Rosobrnadzor which had intended to promote a self-organized pool of independent experts (Interview RU No. 15, 2017). This support ceased after a leadership change in Rosobrnadzor and the move of *Rosakredagenstvo* to Moscow, but the organization continued under the umbrella of NCPA.

As of 2014, there were 970 experts organized within the guild, including 690 rectors, vice-rectors of HEIs, directors, and deputy directors of HEI branches (ENQA, 2014b). The Guild trains and certifies around 150 every year to act as external reviewers and was one of the stakeholder organizations that took part in the design of the 2013 law on education (ENQA, 2014b). The National Conference of the Guild of Experts appoints the 25 members of the National Accreditation Board (NAB) within NCPA (see above).

12.1.2.4 International organizations

International agencies and foundations such as the ***World Bank***, the ***OECD*** and the **Soros Foundation** played an active role in policy-development, during the 1990ies, either through direct consulting, or via interaction through projects funded through them. The World Bank financed about 70 projects for the amount of 14.2 billion US$, among others the introduction of the Unified State Exam (*Edinyi gosudarstvennyi ekzamen - EGE).* Their marketization-based and corporate managerialist ideologies shaped significantly shaped the Russian understanding of modernization of the higher education sphere (Gounko & Smale, 2007; Telegina & Schwengel, 2012).

Since the early 1990ies, the ***European Union*** had funded a number of regional reform projects in higher education through their TACIS/TEMPUS programs, which allowed international exchange and mobility and have been described as a precursor for Russia's accession to the Bologna Process (Telegina & Schwengel, 2012). The role of international organizations in the governance of the Russian higher education system greatly diminished during the 2000ies and, by 2015, is virtually nonexistent (Interview RU No. 9, 2017).

12.1.3 Instruments of higher education governance in Russia

12.1.3.1 Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

The Russian system quality assurance framework consists of a number of mechanisms and instruments. These include the Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education, professional qualification standards, State licensing and accreditation, the government efficiency monitoring, and public and professional accreditation.

12.1.3.1.1 Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education (FSES) (*gosudarstvennyy obrazovatel'nyy standart*[108])

The FSES are a set of state educational standards and requirements which are binding for all levels educational programs (primary, basic general, secondary, secondary vocational education and higher professional education). HEIs are bound by law to comply with the FSES when offering study programs. Compliance with the FSES is a prerequisite for State Accreditation. Since 2008, Moscow State and St. Petersburg State universities have been given the right to offer study programs according to their own standards. In 2016, it was still being discussed to extend these rights also to National Research Universities (Interview RU No. 14, 2017). The FSES were first mentioned in the Federal Law On Education in 1992 (Kouptsov & Tatur, 2001). They are developed by associations of universities offering study programs with a similar profile, so-called *teaching and methodological associations* (UMOs). The development of all standards by all UMOs is overseen by a coordination council. The FSES are then approved and put into force by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

Contents of FSES

Aside from describing the structure of HE system and that of state documents certifying graduation they formulate binding requirements of educational programs in terms of

a) Which fields of study may be offered (list of "specializations");
b) Defined mandatory minimal components for study programs ("basic educational programs"). The mandatory minimum for the content of an educational program (basic educational program) constitutes the so-called federal component of the educational program defines the core elements of any specific specialty. It can be complemented by either regional components and/or components designed by the particular HEI.
c) academic freedom of higher education institutions in the definition of the content of higher education
d) academic load for students and teachers
e) prerequisites to offer educational programs (faculty, financial, logistical)

[108] The standards are published on http://fgosvo.ru/

f) Intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by graduates;
g) information provision of the teaching and research process
h) the procedure for the state requirements for the development and approval minimum content and level of training of graduates in specific directions (specialties) of higher education in as the federal component;
i) the rules of state control over compliance with requirements State educational institution of higher professional standard education.

Development of FSES

Until 2010, there have been three "generations" of FSES. The first generation of standards entered into force in 1994-1995, the second in 2000-2001, and the third in 2010.

The first set of the SES was developed between 1992 and 1996 and entered into force in 1994-95. It contained over 600 state standards for every education program being taught at HEIs at the time in Russia. They specified minimum contents of study programs as well as minimum requirements to be met by graduates. The contents in terms of taught disciplines were determined to 70% by federally mandated components and to 30% given over to the discretion of the regional bodies or individual HEIs.

The 2nd generation of the FSES entered into force in 2000-2001. HEIs were now allowed to determine up to 20% of their educational program content themselves.

After Russia joined the Bologna process in 2003 Russia, work on a third generation of SES began, featuring a competence-based approach (Fomin & Reznikova, 2006) and allowing a greater degree of academic freedom and better adapting curricula to regional labor market needs (EACEA, 2012c). In December 2004 the Council on State Educational Standards of Professional Education was created, which includes representatives of employer associations[109].

In 2010, the third generation of Standards entered into force. Besides a competence-orientation and the formulation of learning-outcomes, it introduced the possibility of a modular structure of curricula and allowed HEIs generally more freedom to flesh out the content of study programs. Universities were allowed to independently select half of their courses and curricula. All HEIs were required to offer optional courses in every study program. Up to 50 percent of student learning time was designated as reserved for independent study.

As of 2014, FSES have been developed for Bachelor, Specialist and Master level programs and were in the process are being elaborated for programs of doctoral training (ENQA, 2014a). However, a monitoring conducted by the Association of Classical Universities of Russia (ACUR) of the effectiveness of FSES implementation across Russian HEIs showed that while competence and credit-based approach

[109] decree of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science no. 152 of 30 December 2004

of curricular design was formally observed, HEIs showed little understanding of the instructional concepts behind it (Tuning Russia, 2014).

12.1.3.1.2 State licensing, attestation, and accreditation – 1992-2000

The 1992 *Law On Education* granted HEIs the rights to accept additional students on tuition-fee basis, to open new study programs, including postgraduate education, and allowed the creation of non-federal, e.g. municipal and private HEIs and granted formerly specialized "institutes" the right to change their status to "academy" or "university" (Motova & Pykkö, 2012). To regulate the higher education sector and maintain a certain structure and order, compliance with the State Educational Standards, was to be ensured by a system of State *licensing*, *attestation*, and *accreditation* (*litsenzirovaniye*, *attestatsiya i akkreditatsiya*). This system covered State as well as private HEIs and has more or less stayed in place since it was established. The original system contained three steps:

Licensing is a procedure to verify whether an HEI had sufficient facilities (premises, equipment, information and library resources, and teaching staff) to carry out educational activities. Attaining a license meant that HEIs are authorized to deliver instruction and benefit from certain tax benefits (EACEA, 2012c). The licensing process includes a review of a defined set of documents followed by a site-visit of the HEI by a group of experts. It was carried out first by the licensing department of the ministry, and since 2004 by Rosobrnadzor. Licensing needs to take place before any students have started their studies.

Attestation consisted of verifying graduate' performance on the dimensions outlined in State Educational Standards (SES). The *State Attestation Service* was charged with examining every State HEI every five years for compliance with the SES. Since the process required graduates it could only be conducted five years after the first cohort of students started their degree. Non-compliance could lead to a closure of the HEI.

Accreditation is a process focusing on the institution leading to formal recognition of an HEI's status by the State. A positive result grants the accredited institution the right to award nationally recognized diplomas of the state format and makes it eligible to participate in state budget funding mechanisms. Successful accreditation grants HEIs a status as either institute, academy or university, depending on their performance on a number of statistical indicators. It also exempts male students from obligatory military service until they have completed they studies. In case of a positive decision, the HEI is granted a Certificate of State Accreditation with a supplement which lists the accredited educational programs the HEI has the right to offer. The certificate is granted for the period of five years but can be withdrawn by Rosobrnadzor in case of infractions of norms and regulations. Contrary to licensing, which was mandatory for both private as well as public HEIs, accreditation was formally mandatory only for public HEIs. However, since private HEIs also wish to enjoy the benefits described above, there is a strong incentive to apply for accreditation. In the 1995 system, the accreditation procedure was based on the results of licensing and attestation and the performance of the HEIs graduates. The first accreditation

procedure therefore could be carried out only three years after licensing, after the first cohort of students has graduated (EACEA, 2012c). Attestation and accreditation were merged into one procedure in 2000.

Until the 2012 changes to the law on education, State accreditation had focused on the institutional level. Since the law came into effect in 2013, state accreditation exclusively refers to study programs, which are assessed on their compliance with the FSES while still taking into account characteristics of the institution (ENQA, 2014a).

The process of state accreditation in 2014

The following process is described in ENQA's 2014 evaluation of NAA (ENQA, 2014a).

1. An HEI applies for state accreditation on the basis of the Federal State Educational Standards.
2. NAA selects a panel of experts to conduct the external review.
3. The panel of experts analyses the data each HEI is obligated to regularly publish on its web-site, and, optionally, the results of student testing carried out independently by NAA.
4. The panel of experts conduct a site visit (lasting normally 5 days). During this process, experts assess the different study programs under review.
5. Each expert individually writes his or her own report on the study programs they evaluated.
6. NAA compiles an analytical report to the accreditation board, including a draft decision on compliance or non-compliance with the accreditation indicators. This report is based on
    a. The data submitted by the HEI according to the indicators of state accreditation of educational institutions' activities;
    b. results from student tests conducted as part as the state accreditation process;
    c. the report of the expert panel;
7. The accreditation board assesses the report and makes a recommendation to the *Accreditation Collegium* consisting of senior officials from Rosobrnadzor. These take a decision.
8. The conclusion of the panel is sent to the HEI for information by Rosobrnadzor, and Rosobrnadzor also publishes the conclusion at its website. The HEI's can challenge the outcomes of the state accreditation process only in court.
9. HEIs, whose study programs did not pass accreditation have to re-apply after one year. Otherwise the accreditation is valid for six years.

Table 23 shows the types of information sources used in Russian State Accreditation as of 2014.

Main documents in State Accreditation

	Document	Author/source	Intended readership	Published
1	Data on the institutions and programmes under accreditation	HEI sends data to NAA, who processes it and make a report	Expert panel, NAA, and the general public	Yes – at the website of Rosobrnadzor Similar information is available in the yearly self-evaluation reports published at the HEIs' websites
2	Results from students tests	NAA	Expert panel and NAA	No
3	Expert reports on the evaluated programs	Individual experts in the panel	Expert panel, HEI, and NAA	No
4	Conclusions of the expert panel	The expert panel	NAA, AB, HEI, and the general public	Yes – at the website of Rosobrnadzor
5	Analytical materials	NAA	Accreditation Board	No
6	Decision/order on accreditation	Accreditation Board /Rosobrnadzor	HEI and the general public	Yes – at the website of Rosobrnadzor

Table 23: Main documents used in Russian State Accreditation as of 2014 (ENQA, 2014)

12.1.3.1.3 Government Efficiency Monitoring

In 2012, when Dmitry Livanov was appointed Minister of Education and Science, he stated that government policy would be to fight low-quality HEIs. The framework of the Federal Program of Education Development 2016-2020 stated that the number of HEIs should be reduced by 40% overall and the number of branch campuses by 80% (Pravitel'stvo RF, 2014).

In order to identify underperforming HEIs, in 2012–2013 a yearly evaluation procedure was introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science based on an indicator-based monitoring system (Froumin, I. et al., 2014). The monitoring uses institutional performance indicators from the areas education, research, internationalization and others[110]. HEIs which do not meet the standards, are investigated by Rosobrnadzor. If found wanting, they are either closed or merged with other, more 'effective' institutions in the vicinity.

While the official justification for the quality monitoring and HEI mergers is to improve the quality and "effectiveness" of the Russian HE system, Semyonov points to demographic changes as an important driving force. Number of students has declined from a total of 7.5 million in 2008-09 to only 5.2 million in 2014-15 with population forecasts predicting a fall to just 4.2 million students in 2020 (Semyonov, 2015). In this view the process is driven by the desire to consolidate an oversized yet underperforming

[110] For the full list of indicators see http://indicators.miccedu.ru/monitoring/attach/%D0%90%D0%9A-30_05%D0%B2%D0%BD_30.03.2015.pdf

HE system. In addition, the initiative is officially targeted mainly at private HEIs, many of which were opened in the 1990s and do not have adequate resources and teaching staff (Semyonov, 2015).

12.1.3.1.4 Public and professional public accreditation of educational programs

Public and professional public accreditation (*obshchestvennaya i professional'no*-obshchestvennaya *akkreditatsiya*) intends to verify and recognize compliance of a study program with specific professional standards or labor market requirements as defined by employer's or industry associations. An example for professional accreditation is the National Agency of Professional Qualifications (NAPK) founded by RSPP, which accredits study programs according to professional standards for different fields and commercial activities.

It was mentioned in the Russian laws on education since the 1990ies (Interview RU No. 14, 2017). In 2002/2003, related to Russia's ascension to the Bologna Process, it was planned that Rosobrnadzor would certify public professional accreditation agencies and recognize their accreditation as equivalent to state accreditation. The planned certification was never implemented, however (Interview RU No. 14, 2017).

The 2012 law on education mentioned "public-professional accreditation", "public accreditation", and "independent quality assessment" as optional quality assurance instruments that HEIs could participate in. As with state accreditation, since 2012, public-professional accreditation is exclusively granted at the study program level.

While the government welcomes HEIs going through public professional accreditation and Rosobnadzor is supposed to take its results "into account", public-professional accreditation is no substitute for state accreditation and does not entail any special status and no form of official recognition. The government does use some forms of incentives to encourage HEIs to undergo public-professional accreditation. The most powerful of those is their the inclusion of the percentage of accredited (through public-professional or international accreditation) study programs in the list of key performance indicators for HEIs participating in the Federal University Program and the research university program (Interview RU No. 4, 2015). Other "incentives" include its mention in the Government Development programs for education (*FTSPRO*) and the inclusion of existing/non-existing accreditation in government data collection tools. Accredited programs may be more likely to be granted more government-funded study places (Interview RU No. 4, 2015).

Most actors agree with the following assessment:

> *"Public-professional accreditation does not play a significant role yet. Why? Firstly, the government has not passed on that function. These structures exist, [but] they are voluntary, not mandatory ones. Secondly, the majority of them work in another segment, in the segment of*

professional accreditation, not in the accreditation of higher education institutions. [But primarily] since the government dominates in this function, they [the accreditation agencies] only play a secondary role." (Interview RU No. 8, 2017)

12.1.3.1.5 Information provision

Annual self-evaluation of HEIs

Each HEI is obliged to conduct an annual self-evaluation and provide data about its activity. This self-evaluation includes an assessment of its educational activities, its management system, the contents and quality of students' training, the organization of its educational processes, data on graduates' employment, and the quality of faculty, teaching, library and information support, logistics, internal education quality assurance system, as well as an analysis of defined performance indicators (ENQA, 2014a). All Self-evaluation reports need to be published on the HEI's website. The data collected in the annual self-evaluation is the basis for an HEI's application to State Accreditation and also collected by Rosobrnadzor.

University Rankings

Prior to the 2000ies, a university's reputation was perpetuated through word of mouth and "common wisdom" placing certain state HEIs in Moscow and St. Petersburg at the top of the reputational ladder. The first ranking of Russian universities was published by the *Kar'era* magazine in 1999. In 2001, the Ministry of Education issued its own public HEI ranking[111] which it continued to produce until 2009 when it contracted the development of rankings out to the Interfax Group and Radio "Ekho Moskvy" (Forrat, 2012a). University Rankings further gained in significance in Russian higher education when ranking placements became key performance indicators (KPI) in the Federal University Program, the National Research University Program and, most prominently, the 5/100 program.

Other organizations providing rankings ranging from media to professional and student associations, and the universities themselves appeared during the 2010ies such as rankings by Expert Ra[112], the Moscow Foundation for Training and the promotion of innovation activities[113] (*Moskovskiy Fond Podgotovki Kadrov I Sodeystviya Razvitiyu Innovatsionnoy Deyatel'nosti*) but according to higher education experts, these did not become to play become a significant influence in the governance of HEIs.

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[111] See Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation N 631 "O reitinge vysshikh uchebnykh zavedeniy (vmeste s vremennoy metodikoy opredeleniya reitingov spetsial'nostey i vuzov)" (On the ranking of higher education institutions [together with the temporary methodology of programs' and institutions' rankings]). February 26, 2001. Minobrnauki RF. (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation) Reitingi vuzov Rossii 2001- 2009. (Ranking of Russian higher education institutions.) Access date: May 30, 2011. http://rating.edu.ru/Old.aspx.

[112] http://raexpert.ru/

[113] http://www.mfpk.ru/

12.1.3.2 Regulation of admission into higher education

Unified State Exam (EGE)

Prior to 2001, admission to higher education in Russia required having a secondary school leaving certificate *(Attestat o srednem [polnom] obshchem obrazovanii)*. Applicants could then apply to individual institutions who conducted their own admission examinations. As in many Post-Soviet countries, however, admission to tertiary education had become one of the most corrupt interfaces of the higher education system in Russia (Clark, N., 2005). In 2001, an admission reform was launched piloting a centralized Unified State Exam (EGE) for admission to universities. The EGE is a written form and includes several subjects which the students can chose to take, Mathematics and Russian language being compulsory. The admission process under the EGE consists of two waves. In a first step, students can use their USE scores to apply to one or several study programs at one or more HEIs. After all applications have been collected, HEIs rank student's scores and issue recommendations of whether or not to accept the students. Students can then choose their preferred study program. Those students who have not been accepted in the first wave, can wait for study places opening up during the second wave, when the study places who have not been filled become available to them. In addition, due to the availability of both budget-financed and tuition-based study places, students with lower grades may get the option to study on a tuition-fee basis. The nationwide state entry exam was intended to limit the possibility of corruption and the make access to HE easier and more transparent, particularly for cross-regional student migration. The EGE was extended across regions until, in 2009, university-specific entrance examinations were abolished altogether and replaced by the government-administered EGE. There is some evidence that the introduction of the EGE has improved the likelihood of students applying to several HEIs, regardless of family income and educational background of parents (Ampilogov, Prakhov, & Yudkevich, 2014)

It should be noted that even after the EGE had been made compulsory, the Olympiad system was retained as a university-admission track. Such nationwide academic "olympiads" had been held since Soviet times in all school subjects. The winners of Olympiads are granted preferential enrollment to specific study programs, either without taking the USE score into account at all, or by getting an automatic perfect score for specific subjects. In general, since Olympiad winners are considered talented and well-prepared for university, the number of students who are enrolled based on their results, is generally considered a sign of prestige and quality of a university (Kouzminov, 2002). The average EGE results of students as well as the number of students entering an HEI based on their results in olympiads were included as indicator in the university efficiency monitoring of 2012.

After the EGE had become universal, it became an instrument for the government to regulate the number of students to admit into higher education through the establishment of a minimal "cut-off score" required for eligibility to study in any HEI, while HEIs themselves may set minimal scores on their own[114].

[114] In actual practice, only a small number of high-prestige HEIs use this possibility

These must always be higher than the minimal scores set by Rosobrnadzor. In addition to setting the minimal score for entrance to university, Rosobrnadzor also sets a minimal passing score for students to be awarded their secondary education diploma. The methodology and criteria Rosobrnadzor uses to set minimal passing scores is not publicly accessible.

12.1.3.3 Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

Autonomy of HEIs

In 1992, the most significant change for university autonomy happened when the power to elect rectors passed from the supervising Ministry to the academic council of the HEIs themselves. HEIs also received considerable autonomy to employ staff and manage their day-to-day academic affairs. Because of the budget contractions, during the 1990ies, this autonomy was used mainly for economic survival, rather than for innovation (Interview RU No. 9, 2017). Curriculum autonomy was still rather limited by relatively rigid State Standards, although unlike as during Soviet times, HEIs now had the freedom so use any textbook they liked.

Since 1992, most HEIs are headed by a rector who is elected for five years by the academic council of the university[115] and who may appoint a number of deputy/vice-rectors responsible for specific areas. An academic council composed of the rector, the vice-rectors and other HEI leaders (e.g. deans) decides on issues related to the development of the HEI. HEIs are structured in faculties that are composed of academic chairs and their staff (EACEA, 2012c) or in institutes, departments and schools, depending on the university's charter. The academic council is also responsible for managing the non-budgetary funds of the HEI. However, academic councils can get quite large and 120 members are not unusual. In addition, while the majority of council members are proposed by the general staff based on a vote by secret ballot, they are appointed by the university rector. Since the rector is ex-officio also the council's chairmen and other ex-officio members such as vice-rectors, and directors of institutes are nominated by the rector, the rector plays the central role of the Councils, controls the agenda for meetings and dominates the decision making-process (Beliakov et al., 1999). While the majority of the academic council's members are elected, in many cases there are only single candidates for certain positions (Interview RU No. 1, 2015). Working committees attached to the council are appointed by the Rector's order. In general, academic councils are not a powerful body and rectors therefore control both the administrative as well the academic operations of universities (Interview RU No. 8, 2017). As one higher education expert notes:

[115] Except for the rectors of Moscow and St. Petersburg State and the of the Federal Universities who are appointed by presidential/government decree for five years each.

> *"There not enough clearly outlined steering functions, which the academic councils perform themselves and their composition leads to the fact that there is a very large number of administrators, who are involved in the system of management [who themselves] depend on the rectors and vice-rectors and so on. […] this leads to a monopolization of power, with certain limits, because the academic council is still a limitation of the power of the university administration. However, it is a weak instrument." (Interview RU No. 8, 2017)*

As a variant of the above model, since 2006, HEI can chose to become "autonomous institutions" which receive a block grant subsidy instead of a line-item budget and enjoy greater financial autonomy. Autonomous institutions also have a board of trustees *(nablyudatel'niy sovet*) which appoints a president instead of a rector. Also in 2006, an important change in university autonomy took place, when an amendment to the law on education required that candidates for the post of rector had to be approved by a governmental committee. This meant that politically unreliable candidates could be excluded (Smolin & Nasibov, 2006).

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, HEIs have gained increasing administrative, financial and academic autonomy. As summarized by EACEA (2012c), they may

- Establish their own organizational structure
- develop their own medium-term budget plans and decide on the use of their budget
- identify goals and objectives of academic and research activities
- determine admission quotas and procedures
- establish the level of their tuition fees (but not less than the cost of state-funded places)
- develop courses and identify areas of training (within the State Educational Standards)
- recruit teaching staff (on a competitive basis) and conclude contracts of employment with them
- implement up-skilling programs
- engage in international cooperation

Financial autonomy of State HEIs

The 1992 Law on Education established HEIs as economically independent institutions. It established state funding rates per student and allowed HEIs to generate additional income from tuition fees, business and other activities. HEIs were allowed to hold three types of assets: Assets contributed by the founder (Ministry) could be used by the HEI for use according to the educational mission. Assets, which HEIs developed on its own are under the full control of the HEI, as is land, who can be rented out but cannot not be sold (Beliakov et al., 1999). Until 2013, however, State HEI budgets needed to be approved each year by the respective sectoral ministry and they underlie certain restrictions (such as they may not take out loans).

In 2006 the Federal Law No.174-FZ9 established the possibility for HEIs to become "autonomous institutions" (AU). The funding scheme for these institutions works on the basis of a block grant subsidy instead of a per-student funding approved by the ministry. Autonomous institutions do not underlie the restrictions on financial activities, they may establish subsidiary business entities and gain capital profits but the State is also not secondarily liable for their debts (Klyachko, T. & Sinelnikov-Murylev, 2012). As another specificity, autonomous institutions have a board of trustees *(nablyudatel'niy sovet*) which appoints a president instead of a rector.

Since 2013, all public institutions (HEIs, hospitals, kindergartens, etc.) received their budget in the form of a formula-based lump sum. This greatly increased transparency of financing and allowed gave HEIs the autonomy to create their own financial planning, independent of ministry interference (Interview RU No. 12, 2017).

Intra-institutional monitoring and incentive mechanisms

The highly standardized administrative governance of Soviet higher education relied on unified rules and procedures, among which comprehensive reporting played an important role (Beliakov et al., 1999). Statistical monitoring had long been used to assess the performance of HEIs and their staff. The indicators used, however, had been mostly related to fulfilling quantitative quotas and adhering to plans, rather than innovative and development activities and staff remunerations since Soviet Times had varied depending on seniority, functions and scientific degrees (Beliakov et al., 1999). In 2012, the new law on education introduced so-called "*effective contracts*" (these were introduced in the entire public sector). Effective contracts represent a mixed-model of fixed- and variable salary components which can be tied to the attainment of certain objectives set by the HEI leadership. The level of compensation is thus linked to the achievement of certain key performance indicators, typically based on scientific publications, evaluations of teaching or applied work. Effective contracts have a typical duration of 1-2 years after which they need to be renewed, shorter than the 3-5 years renewal periods which had been common since the Soviet era.

HEIs began to use effective contracts widely, in part possibly in order to align the evaluation of staff with the indicators used in the government efficiency monitoring of HEIs (Interview RU No. 1, 2015).

> *[If] we need to publish more, how do we force the staff to publish more? Some universities do more… well on the monetary basis, like if you publish more, you get some bonuses to your salary. Some universities do it on a kind of force basis like if you don`t publish enough, we just fire you. (Interview RU No. 1, 2015)*

Other observers, however, disagree with this assessment and do not see a relationship between the monitoring and the introduction of effective contracts.

12.1.3.4 Financing of HEIs

Russian HEIs derive their funding primarily from four sources: State financing via budget-funded study places, tuition funding from fee-paying students, state financing from special government programs, and private and state-funded R&D contracts (Since 1996, research projects are funded separately from educational activities).

State Funding

State HEIs obtain their funding primarily through the number of occupied state-subsidized study places. The maximum number of student places funded from the federal budget is limited and allocated among HEIs by the Ministry of Education or the respective ministry to which HEIs are subordinated. From the 1990ies until 2007, the model of state funding remained structurally unchanged since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Public funding was organized by calculating line-item budgets for HEIs on the basis of past costs in combination with a state-mandated quota of specialists that were to be trained on the state budget. The funding varied considerably between HEIs, as expenses were calculated partly on past costs, partly on the number of students and partly on other considerations, such as the cost of maintenance of buildings, the cost of equipment, laboratory materials, books, etc.

In 2002, a system of "money-follows-students" launched as an experiment ("state financial obligations to individuals" / *gosudarstvennye imennye finansovye obyazatel'stva—GIFO*), resting on the unified-state exam (EGE). This was met with strong opposition was ultimately ceased in 2005 after a pilot phase. After the GIFO experiment was canceled, a new model of "normative financing" (*normativnoe finansirovanie*) was developed. In 2012, the funding model was changed from an allocation by universities to a system of state subsidies based on a state order for the training of a number of specialists in certain disciplines, for which HEIs need to bid. HEIs does receive money for the number of students for whom they get a state order to train. The funding formula takes into account normative costs and a number of coefficients (regional, field of education, etc.).

State funding is, however, the most important source of revenue for HEIs as, on average, 70-80 per cent of State HEIs' budget is drawn from the State budget (EACEA, 2012c). In addition, State HEIs may have access to premises and housing facilities free of charge. On the other hand, they are restricted in taking up loans and to generate profits from the use of state property (EACEA, 2012c). Additional State funding can be generated from research contract or grants for pure and applied research.

Income from tuition fees

HEIs may derive non-State funding from tuition fees, the provision of supplementary services, consultative services, state contracts for training and retraining certain target groups (e.g. civil servants or teaching staff of regional universities), capitalizing on their intellectual property; or by renting out state property managed by HEIs (EACEA, 2012c). Tuition income plays a significant role for most Russian HEIs: The proportion of students paying for their education rose from 41 % in 2000 to 63 % in

2010/2011, when it represented a third of all university incomes (Smolentseva et al., 2015). The number of fee-paying students that a state-subsidized university can accept is capped.

Funding of private HEIs

Until 2012, private HEIs did not receive any state funding and had to rely on tuition fees and their founders' subsidies. Since the introduction of per capita funding, they participate in the same funding scheme as State HEIs (EACEA, 2012c). They are also allowed to compete for participation in all federal programs, contracts and projects on the same basis as State HEIs. In practice, however, no non-state HEI was so far included in large government funding programs (see below).

Income from federal programs and grants

Income generated from federal programs and grants such as the "federal program for development of education" and the "priority regional projects on education" is an important additional source of funding for both State as well as private HEIs and has increased in importance ever since the Federal University Program was launched in 2006.

12.1.4 Competitive programs for investment and differentiation of higher education

While the 1990ies were characterized by a massive quantitative growth of private and public HEIs and their branches, between 2004 and 2013, a process of significant top-down differentiation took place. Reflecting the preliminary result of this process, certain HEIs enjoy special status and privileges. These which comprise 9 *Federal Universities*, 29 *National Research Universities* (*Natsional'nyye issledovatel'skiye universitety*). Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities form a category of their own. In 2015, the differentiation process continued with the establishment of regional flagship universities.

Innovative education programs (since 2004)

The first example of targeted funding for competitively selected universities, the program "innovative education programs" provided special funding for 62 HEIs for the implementation of new innovative education programs.

Federal Universities (since 2006)

Federal Universities were established through the Federal University Program (2006-2011) by merging several regional universities. The mission of Federal Universities is to implement innovative study programs, modernize higher education, offer training and skills development for the socio-economic development of the region, carry out basic and applied research, and bring it into application. Federal Universities were the first Russian HEIs who had to prepare a strategic development plan, have an advisory board, and develop their own education standards (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Between 2006 and

2015, a total of nine federal Universities were established by mergers of over 40 smaller universities[116] (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). This was the first time that the Russian government made mergers of several HEIs a precondition to participate access program funding.

Moscow and St. Petersburg State University gain special status and support by decree

Since 2008, Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University, who had always been regarded as "flagships" of the Russian HE system and who boasted a good record of research, enjoyed a special legal status as well as significant resources for infrastructure development (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014). Lomonosov Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University also enjoy special privileges by presidential order exempting them from having to comply with the State Educational Standards.

National Research Universities (since 2008)

National Research Universities were selected through a national competition between 2008–2010. A total of 29 universities were awarded the title of National Research University for a period of 10 years (Fedyukin & Froumin, 2010). The selected universities received funding for implementing their research strategies between 2009–2013[117], as well as a number of privileges (Froumin, I. et al., 2014). The total additional funding for the National Research Development Program for the period 2009-2012 was 34.825 billion RUB, most of which was invested in improving the material base and information resources, but also into quality management and internationalization (Froumin, I. & Povalko, 2014).

The new excellence initiative: The "5/100" Program

The State Education Development Program of 2012 called for at least five Russian universities in the top one hundred in global university rankings by 2020. To achieve this ambitious goal a multi-year program called the "5/100 initiative" was launched, which provided three times more than the previous research universities program. Participating universities received greater autonomy in how to spend the program money, while their progress along their university development programs is monitored each year by a special *Council on Global Competitiveness Enhancement of Russian Universities*. HEIs that do not meet the goals laid out in their development plans may be expelled from the program. In 2013,

[116] The Southern Federal University in Rostov-on-Don and the Siberian Federal University in Krasnoyarsk, The Northern (Arctic) Federal University in Arkhangelsk, the Kazan Federal University, the Ural Federal University in Ekaterinburg, the Far Eastern Federal University in Vladivostok and the North-Eastern Federal University in Yakutsk, the North-Caucasian Federal University in Stavropol and the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad.

[117] Two pilot universities National Research Nuclear University - Moscow Engineering Physics Institute (State University) and National Research Technological University - State Technological University "Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys" were identified by the Decree of President D. Medvedev in 2008. Later in 2008 12 more universities were identified through competition (thus bringing a total to 14 universities), which were to obtain an amount of RUB 1.8 billion (approximately EUR 40.5 million) each for the years 2009-2018. In 2009 another 15 universities were identified through competition, which received RUB 49.8 billion from the federal budget for the years 2009-2014. Co-funding of their development programs from extra-budgetary funds should amount to RUB45 billion.

15 universities were selected into the program. In 2015, this number was raised 21 participating universities.

Regional Flagship universities

In 2015, the MoES launched the regional 'flagship' university program. Through mergers, regional universities could apply to receive the status of Flagship university", who are designated to become drivers of regional socio-economic development. Universities selected in a competition receive additional funding to implement their strategic development program." Flagship universities are intended to eventually exist in every Russian region.

Except the Federal Universities and the designation of Moscow and St. Petersburg State Universities as federal Universities, all programs involved an open competition among HEIs in which they proposed development plans for funded. Success in the Federal and National Research Universities changed their official status and charter. Federal and National Research Universities were required to became to autonomous institutions (AUs). The “Innovative Education” and 5–100 programs provided funding for universities’ development projects and in many cases overlapped with the National Research University program in the sense that many universities were successful in several programs. Of 67 universities involved in at least one program, 13 institutions participated in three programs and 18 more in two programs (Forrat, 2015).

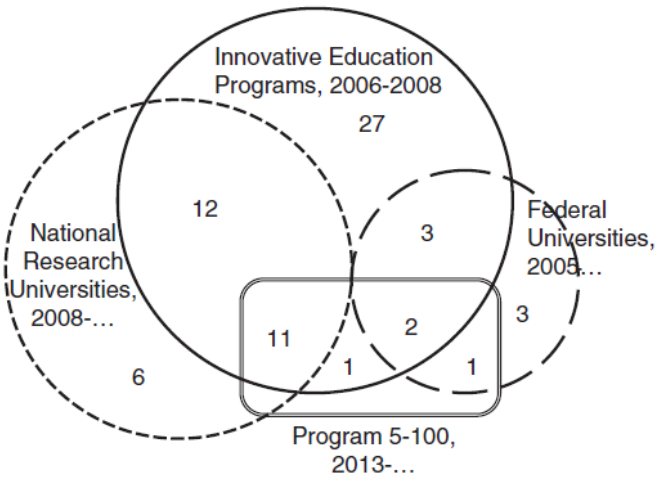

Figure 20: Overlap between the participants of support programs for leading universities, from Forrat (2015)

According to observers and participants, the programs had a significant impact on the HEIs which participated in them, and in this way on the differentiation of the higher education system:

> *„What really changed universities were the development projects, beginning with the first program “innovative universities” in 2004, the Federal Universities, the National Research Universities, 5/100 and now the Regional Flagship universities. They all, in this sense, were a lot more effective, a lot more helpful [than the effectiveness monitoring]. They really changed the picture of higher education today. It became more interesting, richer than 10-15 years ago.*

There really appeared a group of leading universities, who really became universities, oriented towards work on global markets, participating in global networks, trying to conduct research. […] They led to serious social change [in universities]". (Interview RU No. 8, 2017)

12.2 Annex 2: Kazakhstan – The governance of the higher education system

12.2.1 Kazakhstan: Structure of the higher education system

12.2.1.1 Structure of Educational programs

Study programs are divided into professional "*specialties*" (*Special'nosti*), which are further divided into "*specializations*" (*Specializacii*), such as specialty engineering, specialization thermal power engineering. Since 2007, "*specializations*" were reorganized into 4-year Bachelor's (*Bakalavr*) and 2-year Master's (*Magistr*) programs. As in Russia, these are divided into study area and study fields (*Napravlenija*). All study programs are assigned an identification number and name. Study programs of the same study area have the same ID number. The *State classifier* lists all study programs, HEIs are allowed to offer and defines contents and structure for study areas. The standards centrally regulate, the number of hours by contact hours, seminar work; student work load, the length of internships, thesis writing and examinations; contents of study programs divided into 1) foundation studies/core courses 2) basic professional courses 3) specialized courses.

Curricula are structured in general education disciplines, professional disciplines, basic (core) and profile disciplines, as well as professional practical work in the specialty. As in Russia, foundation studies/core courses constitute the major part of the curriculum, with basic professional and specialization subjects beginning in the third year[118]. Core course requirements are the same for all specializations within the same study area. There is an optional component within which HEIs may realize their own focusses.

12.2.1.2 Differentiation of the higher education system in Kazakhstan

The institutional landscape of Kazakhstan's HE system by 2015 is diverse. HEIs are differentiated based on two dimensions.

Dimension 1: Scope of study programs

Following their Soviet heritage, universities (*universitety*), academies (*akademii*) and institutes (*instituty*) are distinguished based on the number of fields of studies and study programs they offer. A **University** is defined as implementing educational programs of higher education, Master and doctoral programs in three and more groups of specialties, carries out pure and applied research, and is a scientific and methodological center. An **academy** implements educational programs of higher education with a narrow disciplinary focus (one or two groups of specialties). Lastly, **institutes**, implement professional

[118] From 2017: In the first year

educational programs of higher education with a very narrow disciplinary focus (one group of specialties).

Dimension 2: Ownership Status

Based on the ownership of universities, *state universities* (fully owned by the state), *private universities* (fully owned by private individuals or companies) and *joint-stock company* universities can be distinguished. **State universities** used to have the legal status of "State-owned educational institutions" (*kazennyye predpriyatiya*) before they became "state enterprises on the basis of economic management" (*respublikanskoe gosudarstvennoe predpriyatie na prave khozyaistvennogo vedeniya*) in 2013[119]. State Universities are generally the most highly regulated type of HEI. **Private universities** are owned fully by individuals or firms. A particular feature of Kazakhstan's higher education landscape is that many leading universities have the legal status of **joint-stock companies**, which are owned in part by private investors and in part by the government. Private and joint-stock universities have, due to their legal form, always enjoyed greater organizational and financial autonomy than state HEIs. They may legally create and own other legal entities (such as spin-offs, subsidiaries or commercialization centers), they can retain any profit they make and use it for internal development, and they have always been governed by a governing board or board of directors.

Dimension 3: Special status of universities

Since 1992, there have been several government initiatives to establish innovative leading HEIs. These have included the Kazakh British Technical University (KBTU - established in 2000) and, most recently, Nazarbayev University (established in 2009), but also "national" state universities, who enjoy greater financing and greater autonomy.

National Universities

National Universities are leading scientific and methodological center in the country with a special status granted by presidential order. Staff receive higher salaries (75% more than in other HEIs) and the rector is appointed directly by the President. Among the national universities, there is a sub-group of **National Research Universities** which enjoy even greater curricular autonomy.

[119] The 9 national universities instantly received this status giving them greater autonomy, especially regarding the use of their funds.

Autonomous University: Nazarbayev University

Standing out in Kazakhstan's HE system is Nazarbayev University in Astana (NU). It was founded on the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev in 2010, is a fully English-language institution, with a high percentage of international faculty and staff. All undergraduate students attend free of charge and may receive additional stipends based on performance. The objective of NU is to become a leading international research university and a model for university development in the country. A further specificity is that its schools all maintain a cooperation with twinned departments at leading international universities. Regarding governance, NU operates based on its own law. It develops its own educational standards and is not subject to oversight by the Ministry of Education of Science, but by its governing bodies, the Executive Board, Board of Trustees and the Supreme Board of Trustees. The Chairman of the latter is the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan himself. NU is currently the only autonomous university.

Non-civil Universities are public universities which are operated by military and security organs. There is currently one **international university**, the International Kazakh-Turkish University named. Other international universities operate as private HEIs[120]. The following table shows the number of HEIs per category:

Type of legal status	Number of HEIs
National Universities (State)	9
State Universities	31
Private Universities	54
Joint-Stock Universities[121]	16
Non-civil Universities (State)	13
Autonomous Universities	1
International universities	1

Table 24: Types and number of HEIs in Kazakhstan (by 2017).

12.2.1.3 Size and growth of the higher education system

After independence, the number of Kazakh HEIs rose swiftly, reading a peak of over 180 in 2001, before stricter legislation and quality assurance led some to disappear. The highest concentration of new HEIs appeared in Astana and Almaty, which still has the highest proportion of HEIs in the country.

[120] The Kazakh-American Free University , Kazakh-German University, Kazakhstan-Russian Medical University, Kazakhstan-Russian International University, Egyptian University of Islamic Culture "Nur-Mubarak", and the University of Central Asia

[121] All national and state HEIs will be transformed into non-commercial joint-stock companies

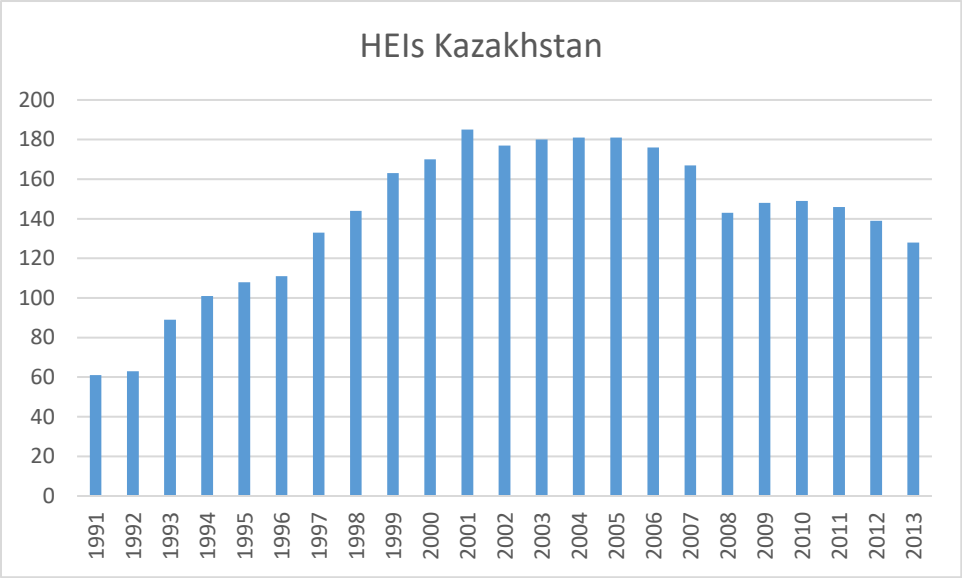

Figure 21: Number of HEIs in Kazakhstan (Source: CIS statistics http://www.cisstat.com/)

The number of students peaked in 2005/2006. The mean reasons for the following decline are the price of higher education and emigration to Russia.

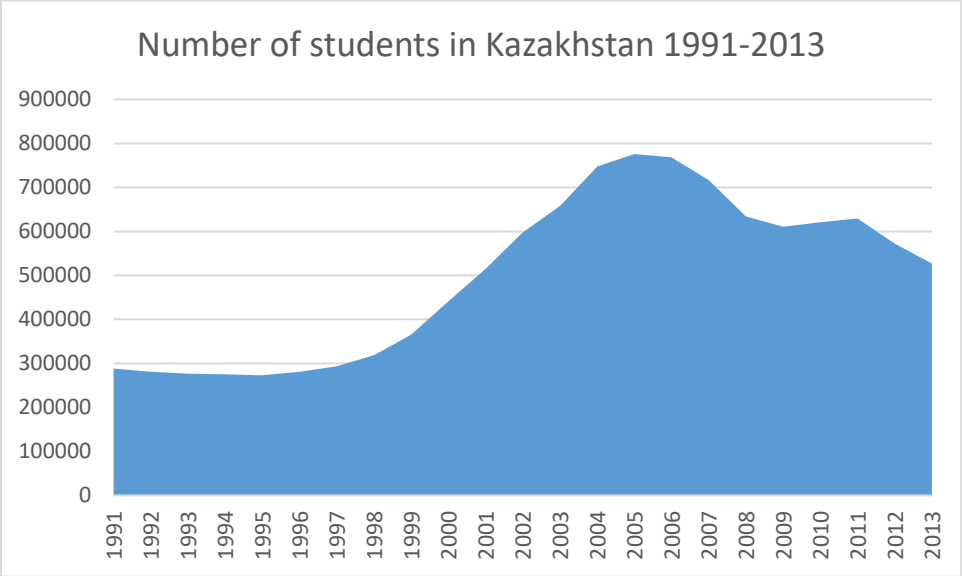

Figure 22: Number of students in Kazakhstan 1991-2013 (Source: CIS statistics http://www.cisstat.com/)

12.2.2 Actors and their capabilities

12.2.2.1 State actors

Ministry of Education and Science (*Ministerstvo obrazovaniya i nauki Respubliki Kazakhstana* – MoES)[122]

[122] http://ortcom.kz/

The MoES is the prime actor in the education landscape of Kazakhstan. Its portfolio has remained relatively unchanged during the decade from 1999, when the Ministry of Education, Health and Sports and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education were merged, until 2011, when a few of functions, such as accreditation, were delegated to buffer organizations. The MoES has remained, however, the key actor controlling and shaping the higher education system. It develops policies, legislation and regulations governing the higher education system. All HEIs but the autonomous Nazarbayev University are regulated by legislation developed by MoES.

Rectors of public universities report directly to the MoES, which, until 2016, had the power to appoint, evaluate, and dismiss them. It also plays an active role in monitoring and regulating HEIs, regulates the structure and procedures within HEIs, and coordinates the development of state educational standards and typical study plans. Through its subsidiary bodies, the MoES operates the licensing and attestation procedures of HEIs, maintains a register of recognized accreditation bodies, and of accredited education institutions and study programs. Its subsidiary bodies verify HEIs compliance with standards and regulations. The MoES is instrumental in public financing of HEIs and establishes the procedures for the allocation of state funding to HEIs, sets the quota and rules of admission and transfer of students to HEIs.

By 2017, the MoES was organized in three divisions by level of education, including the department for higher and professional education. Independently of the departments, it maintains three committees:

- ***The Committee of Control in the Sphere of Education,***
- ***the Committee on the Protection of children, and***
- ***the Science Committee***

The latter formulates government research policy, administer grant competitions and their implementation, and control national research centers. By 2017, the following institutions were subordinated to the department for higher and professional education:

- ***The National Register of Accrediting Bodies***
- ***The National Testing Center (Natsional'nyy tsentr testirovaniya - NTC)***[123]
- ***The Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan***

Committee for Control in the Field of Education and Science (*komitet po kontrolyu vo sfere obrazovaniya i nauki* - CCES) [124]

The Committee for Control in the Field of Education and Science (CCES) as a subsidiary of the Ministry is responsible for the licensing of HEIs and study programs, the monitoring of licensing requirements,

[123] http://www.testcenter.kz
[124] http://control.edu.gov.kz/

state attestation (until 2017), the selective external assessment of the implementation of study programs and the monitoring of compliance with national legislation (ENQA, 2017). It oversaw the *Unified National Test* (UNT), the *Comprehensive Test* (CT) (until 2017), and the *Mid-Term Assessment* (*vneshnaya otsenka uchebnhkh dostizhenii - VOUD*). Likewise, the committee is in charge of confirming and issuing scientific degrees and titles on the basis of their own evaluation of scientific quality of dissertations. CCES emerged from and continues to fulfill the function of the Soviet *VAK*.

Until 2012, it was responsible for nostrification (delegated to the Bologna Process and Mobility center). Until 2017 the UNT was under the CCES. Since 2017, school graduation exams were conducted separately from the UNT again, uncoupling the functions of university entrance and school leaving exam. As the UNT was not regarded any more as a form of control, but part of the application process to HE, responsibility was passed from the committee of control into the responsibility of the department of higher education within the MoES. Likewise in 2017, the administration of the register of accredited quality assurance agencies, HEIs, and study programs was passed to the department for HE within the MoES.

Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Centre under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (*Tsentr Bolonskogo protsessa i akademicheskoy mobil'nosti*)

In 2012, when accreditation became independent, the former *National Accreditation Centre* were reorganized into the *Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center*, a state enterprise subordinated to the under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Burkitbayev & Ibrayeva). The Center was founded to act as a center of expertise for supporting universities in adapting to the Bologna process, to monitor the Bologna Process' implementation within the HE system, as well as for conducting the recognition and nostrification of foreign degrees and diplomas. The center holds different seminars for universities on issues relevant to study reform and develops recommendations on topics such as ECTS, student assessment, or the new national qualifications framework (Interview KZ No. 5, 2016).

Other ministries

Other RF ministries and their local agencies still play an important role for those HEIs which fall under their remit. Notable examples include the Health Ministry, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Agriculture which oversee its respective HEIs and the Interior Ministry which oversees its non-civil HEIs.

The presidential administration

While the MoES is formally responsible for higher education, within the Kazakh political system, the president and his administration are the final authority. According to Ahn et al. (2018), the most significant changes such as the establishment, merger or dissolution of HEIs, have been instituted by presi-

dential order, sometimes with little stakeholder involvement or public debate. The presidential administration is also ultimately responsible for the State Programs in Education, which the government is obliged to carry out. The presidential administration maintains a monitoring of the implementation of the programs according to the dates foreseen in the program and the different ministers need to report on the programs' implementation. The presidential administration also maintains regional inspectorates which conduct inspections of state bodies, although this rarely happens in higher education.

The presidential administration is the supreme arbitrator and takes the final decisions on budgetary issues and strategies. The president also appoints the rectors of the influential national universities[125].

In 2017, the president devolved some of this powers to cabinet and parliament. As one expert describes the relationship between the presidential administration and the government:

> *"If the presidential administration says something, then the ministry subordinates itself. Now they have made some changes, delegated some powers to the government and parliament. Maybe the prime minister will already sign the next state program" (Interview KZ No. 4, 2017)*

National Accreditation Centre (*Natsional'nyy akkreditionnyy tsentr* - NAC) – *dissolved in 2011*

The *National Accreditation Center of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan* (NAC) was created in 2005 as a subsidiary body of the MoES, as part of the State Program on Development of Education 2005-2010. Its purpose was to develop and conduct institutional accreditation of HEIs and accreditation of study programs, based on European and US practices, to participate in international networks of quality assurance agencies, and to administer the recognition of certificates and nostrification of foreign degrees. In 2012, when accreditation became government-independent, the NAC was transformed into the Bologna Process and Mobility Center.

National Register of Accrediting Bodies

The National Register of Accreditation Bodies lists all recognized Quality Assurance Agencies. It is a subsidiary of the MoES and was established in 2011, modelled after EQAR. All registered QAAs are subject to 're-certification', based on an external review, every five years. HEIs are free to choose any of the registered QAAs. As of 2016, Ten agencies, two national and eight international ones, are listed on the Register.

National Testing Center (*Natsional'nyy tsentr testirovaniya - NTC*)[126]

The "Republican State Enterprise" National Testing Center is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It was created as *National Centre of State Standards for Education and Tests* in 1992. The center maintains a basis of experts who develop the testing materials for the Unified National Test (UNT) and the Comprehensive Test (CT) in Kazakhstan, the testing of

[125] Since 2016 based on a nomination procedure by boards of trustees
[126] http://www.testcenter.kz

students of the second/third year of university and was also involved in the testing of students during state attestation of HEIs. Until 2011, it was also responsible for the development of State Standards for education (*gossudarstvennye standarty obrazovaniya po spetsial'nosti)*, which was ceased when the more flexible *typovye uchebnye plany* replaced the highly detailed state standard study programs.

Republican Commission on distribution of educational grants (*respublikanskaya komisiya po raz-predeleniyu gosudarstvennih obrazovatel'nih grantov*)[127]

The Republican Commission on distribution of educational grants is a committee of the department of higher and post-graduate education at the MoES. Its membership consists of rectors of HEIs, representatives of Ministries and trade union and is in charge of awarding state grants to HEI applicants based on their UNT scores.

12.2.2.2 (Semi-)public Agencies

Information-Analytical Center (*Informatsionno-analiticheskiy tsentr* - IAC)

The IAC is a think-tank in the form of a joint-stock company, owned 100% by the MoES. It was established by the government of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2011 for purposes of monitoring and evaluation of the State Program of Education Development 2011-2020 and was accredited as a "scientific organization" by CCES. It was founded to strengthen the element of monitoring and evaluation in educational policy in Kazakhstan. IAC in its 2017 form resulted from the merger with the *National Centre of Education Statistics and Evaluation* (before 2012: *National Centre for Educational Quality Assessment - NCEQA)* in 2015**.**

The Center supports the MoES through information, research and analysis and regularly produces studies, policy briefs and recommendations on all topics of education for the MoES, on ministry commissions (e.g. on university autonomy, building world-class research universities) for which it bids in public contracting procedures. The IAC is also the main coordinator of all OECD projects in education, such as international studies PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, and ICILS. The IAC has a statistics department which collects and processes national education statistics and produces an annual national report on the status and development of the system of education of Kazakhstan.

Through its policy advice and its collaboration with the OECD, the IAC has attained a relatively high centrality in the system of HE. The Head of IAC directly reports to the Minister of Education and Science and The MoES turns to the center for advice and analysis on different questions and integrates its recommendations in state programs (Interview KZ No. 2, 2017), such as in to the SPED 2016-2019 and the "100 concrete steps" state program to develop public service sectors.

[127] A national scientific-technologic counsil (natsional'niy nauchno-issledovatel'skiy sovet) fulfills a similar function for research grants.

12.2.2.3 International organizations

International agencies as the World Bank and the OECD have played an active role in policy- analysis and consulting in Kazakhstan and have provided policy advice to the development of the state programs for educational development (Interview KZ No. 3, 2017).

The World Bank

In contrast to the Russian Federation, in Kazakhstan, international agencies have continued to play an active role in advising and evaluating changes to higher education governance throughout Kazakhstan's independence. Notable examples include the advisory work of the world bank leading up to the introduction of the Unified National Exam in 1999 and the joint analysis of Kazakhstan's tertiary education sector by the OECD and World Bank in 2006 (World Bank & OECD, 2007), which has informed the reforms undertaken in the ''State Program for Education Development 2011–2020" (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016).

OECD

The OECD has conducted a number of reviews of education in Kazakhstan, most notably a joint review with the World Bank in 2006/2007 and in 2017. Many of the findings and recommendations of the review found its way into the *State Program of Education Development for 2011–2020*" (SPED 2011-2020) and policy initiatives.

The goal stated in of Kazakhstan's 2030 and 2050 strategies aim at joining the ranks of the most developed economies. OECD membership represents a prestigious milestone for the government of the country (Interview KZ No. 8, 2017). Pursuing the ultimate goal of OECD membership, since 2011, Kazakhstan has joined a number of OECD comparative research projects such as TALIS, PIACC, and PISA and has begun joining different committees of OECD, including the committee on educational policy. A new structure, the *Information-Analytical Center* (IAC) was established for monitoring and evaluation of the education system and conducting OECD reports. In 2015, Kazakhstan and the OECD began a two-year Country Program, to support a set of reforms of Kazakhstan's policies and institutions, covering areas such as public-sector integrity and governance, environment, health, taxation, competition and business climate, and statistics. The program was envisioned to lead to over 20 policy reviews, cooperation in capacity building projects, an increased level of participation in six OECD Committees, and possible adherence to 28 OECD legal instruments, including the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises. As part of this program, in 2016/2017, the OECD conducted a review of the higher education system which led to recommendations, which noticeable have led to policy efforts to address *the social selectiveness of student grants, the separation of the* UNT school-leaving and university entry test function in 2017 and the widening of university autonomy, a key theme in all OECD evaluations.

The European Union

Since the early 1990ies, the European Union had funded a number of regional reform projects in higher education through their TACIS/TEMPUS programs, which allowed international exchange and mobility. TEMPUS programs have contributed to institutional development, institutional quality management, the development of study programs, commercialization of research and other areas. In the case of Kazakhstan, TEMPUS projects may not have a direct discernable impact on changes on government policy on system governance (Interview KZ No. 17, 2017), they did, however support capacity building and networking. As one of its actions, the European Union supports a network of Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs). This network comprises a pool of experts supporting the modernization of higher education in countries neighboring the EU. Their activities are financed through the Erasmus+ program and coordinated at the local level by the National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs). As by the action's website "*these experts, appointed by the national authorities in the former Tempus Partner Countries, constitute a pool of expertise to promote and enhance the modernization of higher education. They participate in the development of policies and reforms in their countries and contribute to the training of local stakeholders. Their activities consist, for example, in organizing and participating in seminars, writing articles and reports, or providing advice to individual institutions and policy makers*" [128]. In Kazakhstan, the group of HERE experts comprise acting and former directors of the higher education department in the MoES, HEI rectors, vice-rectors and other key stakeholders who regularly meet, conduct seminars and formulate policy recommendations which influence policy-development.

International Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs)

Since 2012, both national and international QAA can legally operate in Kazakhstan, provided that they meet the requirements of and are registered by the *National Register of Accreditation Bodies*. As of 2017, ten agencies, two national and two international ones were listed on the National Register, down from eight international agencies as of 2016 (ENQA, 2017), due to stricter requirements regarding involving local experts.

12.2.2.4 Professional organizations

Association of Higher Education Institutions (*Assotsiatsiya vysshikh uchebnykh zavedeniy Respubliki Kazakhstan*)[129]

The *Association of Higher Educational Institutions of the Republic of Kazakhstan* was established in 2002 as an independent association of mostly private HEIs. By 2017, it comprised 77 private and state universities, which enroll more than 86% of all students of the Kazakhstan. It is accredited with the MoES and is obligatorily involved in assessing and commenting on all changes to normative documents and legislation on higher education, such as changes of qualification and licensing requirements. It is

[128] http://supporthere.org/
[129] http://edurk.kz/

also engaged in cooperation projects such as on a common internet access, student cards and electronic libraries.

Rectors' Council (*Sovet Rektorov*)[130]

The central national Rectors Council was established by order of the Ministry of Education in May 2015 and is supposed to become an authoritative consultative body for Kazakhstan's higher education system. The Council is hosted by the Eurasian University in Astana, the rector of which is first acting president of the council. The Council has five sub-councils in different regions of Kazakhstan.

Independent Kazakh Agency for Quality Assurance in Accreditation (*Nezavisimoe Kazakhstanskoe agenstvo po obespecheniyu kachsetva v obrazovanii* - IQAA)

IQAA is the oldest independent quality assurance agency in Kazakhstan. It was founded in 2008 by Sholpan Kalanova, the former head of the National Accreditation Center (NAC), following the adoption of the 2007 Law on Education which first introduced voluntary accreditation in Kazakhstan. The National Association "Expert", which brings together 200 experts, acts as a minority owner since 2015 (ENQA, 2017). It continues to operate Kazakhstan's first ranking of HEIs which its founder had launched in 2006. Since 2012, IQAA is registered in the *National Register of Accreditation Bodies*. Since 2017, IQAA is full member of European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and a member of many other QA-related associations. It has been engaged in a number of World Bank, EU-funded and bilateral projects to promote quality assurance in Kazakhstan (ENQA, 2017). The Independent Quality Assurance Agency (IQAA) is the leading QAA in terms of the number of reviews conducted (ENQA, 2017). It is financed almost entirely from fees for accreditation services.

Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR)

In 2011, when the National Accreditation Center (NAC) ceased to offer accreditations, the *Independent Agency for Accreditation Rating (IAAR)* was established as a second non-governmental quality assurance agency with the task of ranking HEIs, supporting their competitiveness, and conducting institutional accreditations. It continued to use the accreditation methodology and standards of NAC. IAAR was officially founded by experts who had conducted accreditation reviews for NAC (Interview KZ No. 14, 2017). Since 2013, IAAR is also conducting a yearly national ranking of HEIs. IAAR is registered in the National Register of Accreditation Bodies. IAAR became a full member agency of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 30 November 2016.

Other Quality Assurance Agencies

In 2017, further QAAs were being formed. As of the writing of this study, they did not yet play a significant role in the governance of the HE system.

[130] http://srvrk.enu.kz/ru/

Educational and methodological associations (uchebno-metodicheskie ob'edineniya - UMO)

UMOs exist for each discipline (*napravleniye*) and are composed of representatives of all HEIs which offer study programs in this particular discipline. Each UMO is organizationally "based" at a particular HEIs (the so-called "profile" HEI). The MoES determines which HEI will act as the profile HEI for each UMO and all UMOs are, in turn, organized in the so-called "*Republican educational-methodological council"* (*Respublikanskiy uchebno-metodicheskiy sovet - RUMS)* under the MoES. The members of the RUMS are determined by the MoES and include representatives of UMOs as well as employer representatives, associations of HEIs and other representatives of civil society. All State Standards and "typical study plans" are confirmed by RUMS and enter into force by order of the MoES.

The National Chamber of Entrepreneurs „Atameken" (Natsional'naya palata predprinimateley RK)[131]

The national chamber of entrepreneurs in its current form was founded following a presidiential order in 2013. In 2015 it was officially re-registered in the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan "Atameken". By law all professional associations of entrepreneurs (association of mining, banking companies) were mandated to unite in one organization which gives Atameken a weighty voice politically. Its objective is the creation of favorable conditions for business development through effective partnership between business and the authorities. While it is founded as an association of businesses, the Government of Kazakhstan has the right to veto decisions of its general asssembly.

Since 2008, its predecessor organization had been involved in the development of state programs of education development, in the development of state standards in education, in accreditation and its members are often represented in the governing boards of universities as well as of accreditation agencies. Likewise, since 2008/2009, Atameken is obligatorily involved in assessing and commenting on all changes to normative documents and legislation on education as well as in the development of qualification frameworks and state educational standards. Although the focus of its work is on vocational education, the chamber has been one of the strong proponents of a system of independent accreditation (Interview KZ No. 19, 2017).

12.2.3 Instruments of higher education governance in Kazakhstan

12.2.3.1 Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

The Kazakh quality assurance framework consists of a large number of mechanisms and instruments of standard setting and assessment. Standards include the *State Educational Standards*, the *state classifier*, *typical study plans*, qualification and licensing requirements. Assessment is conducted in the form of

[131] http://palata.kz

state *licensing, post-licensing controls*, *unscheduled controls*, *state attestion* (until 2017) and *state accreditation* (until 2011) and *independent accreditation*. Increasingly, information provision via rankings plays a role in the system and there are two national ranking providers.

12.2.3.1.1 State Educational Standards, state classifier and typical study plans

Since 1994, State Educational Standards (*gosudarstvennye obsheobyazatel'nye standarty obrazovaniya* - SES) are used to regulate contents and structure of educational programs. Their role is even fixed in Article 30 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which states that "*The state establishes universally binding standards of education*". In Kazakhstan's HE system, the SES are intended to assure homogeneity and minimal standards of study programs. Compliance with the standards is assessed in a whole range of quality assurance procedures, among them state licensing, state attestation, and interim state control.

Between 1994 and 2011, State Standards existed for each study program (*gossudarstvennye standarty obrazovaniya po spetsial'nosti - GoSO)*. These highly detailed documents prescribed, aspects of the education process, which subjects to teach in which order, detailed contents of the compulsory subjects, the hours each subject would be taught, which abilities students should possess after the educational program. Each standard included a mandatory core curriculum in the form a list of subjects and the number of credit points to be obtained by students of that study program. Each standard defines "general education disciplines", "basic disciplines" and "profile disciplines" and contain both a compulsory, as well as an elective component, made up of a list of possible disciplines (with minimum credit points) which could be offered to students and studied by them at their leisure during their study program. HEIs did initially have very little freedom to diverge from the plans, although the percentage of the "elective component", which HEIs could determine themselves rose.

The study programs which can be offered by HEIs and their obligatory and elective components are listed in a "state classifier" (*gosudarstvennyy klassifikator*). Neither private nor public HEIs may offer study programs not included in this list. By 2007, there were 342 such 342 state classifiers (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

Evolution of standards

Between independence and 2017, there have been many iterations and changes of the State standards. The first generation of SES were developed in 1994-1995 by *educational and methodological associations* (*uchebno-metodicheskie ob'edineniya* - UMO) which also distributed them among HEIs. This first generation of standards were highly detailed regulations concerning both content as well as processes of higher education and were experienced by many academics as excessive regulation limiting academic freedom (Kalanova, S. & Omirbayev, 2009).

The 1999 edition of the law "On Education" passed the power to develop and endorse SES to the MoES. The development of SES was organized on a competitive basis. Kalanova & Omirbayev (2009) describe

the process of development of standards as follows: The MoES assembles a commission composed of employees of the MoES, the national center for state standards and testing, as well as of prorectors of HEIs and reputable academics, all which are selected by the MoES. The commission announces an open competition to develop/rework standards. Applications to this competition are forwarded to "leading experts" in the field to be graded for their quality, based on which the winner is selected by the commission. The developed standards were then approved by the MoES and registered with the national center for educational state standards and testing and published. The second generation of SES were developed in this way and introduced in 2001-2002.

As part of granting increasing autonomy to HEIs, in 2011, the State Educational Standards for each study program were abolished and replaced by more general framework state standards for the Bachelor, Master's and PhD level which defined the generic basic structure of study programs of each level. On the level of the individual study programs foreseen in the state classifier, only "typical study plans" (*typovye uchebnye plany)* remained, which continued to be developed for each study program (*spetsial'nost'*) by educational and methodological associations (*uchebno-metodicheskie ob'edineniya* - UMO). These plans only contain the list of compulsory subjects to be studied as well as the number of credits and teaching hours. In addition, HEIs may develop their own subjects within the foreseen block of "elective" subjects. These third-generation SES also foresaw formulating key competencies, that students should have acquired after graduation. Also, the number of HE-specific optional subjects was expanded. As by 2017, HEIs may define up to 55% (70% in the case of national research universities).

12.2.3.1.2 State control via licensing, attestation, and accreditation

State control in higher education lies in the hands of the MoES and its subsidiary body, the Committee of Control (CCES). It is conducted in two forms. Forms of scheduled controls (*planovaya proverka*) include *state licensing, post-licensing controls, the comprehensive national mid-term test, state accreditation* (until 2011), and (until 2017) *state attestation.* Unscheduled controls (*neplanovaya proverka*) are conducted by the CCES when there are indications of irregularities, such as a very low performance of students in the interim testing or if complaints reach the committee of control. Both licensing and attestation as procedures existed in similar forms since the Soviet period (Interview KZ No. 16, 2017). The frequency of reforms depends on a procedure of assessment of risk.

Licensing

All HEIs regardless of ownership status need a license from the MoES to operate. The license includes the study programs they are permitted to offer. To offer a new program, the license must therefore be amended. To receive a license, HEIs need to document compliance with the so-called "*qualification requirements*" and the SES. These contain standards concerning infrastructure requirements, financial

resources, and staff qualifications. When standards are not met, a license may be suspended or withdrawn altogether. The CCES further has the authority to conduct post-licensing controls, to verify that the HEI still meets the licensing requirements.

Attestation (until 2017)

For those HEIs who had been granted a license to operate, state attestation was carried out every five years, in order to assess whether the HEI operates according to the state educational standards and meets its goals. The first attestation in newly established HEIs would be carried out after the first graduates had completed their education. The attestation process was conducted by the CCES. During the attestation process, compliance with the State Educational Standards, the "qualification requirements", as well as further quantitative criteria is checked. The key function of attestation was control and oversight (Interview KZ No. 14, 2017) and the process did not foresee issuing recommendations for development or conditional attestation. In case attestation was not granted, an HEI's license was withdrawn and the rector of the HEI could be liable to administrative proceedings. Since 2017, in accordance with the state program on education development 2011-2020, attestation was discontinued and replaced with (voluntary) independent accreditation.

State Accreditation (until 2011)

State Accreditation first appeared in Kazakhstan in the 2001 Law on Education, which introduced a process of state accreditation based mainly on assessing quantitative indicators without the involvement of experts. This procedure was widely criticized as not fit-for-purpose and the state accreditation was suspended until 2005 when the National Accreditation Center was established within the MoES and developed a new procedure based on international standards.

The 2007 law on education reintroduced accreditation as a voluntary procedure without consequences for HEIs. The new approach of state accreditation thus was a process similar to attestation in that it was an external evaluation conducted by peers intended to document that an HEI meets certain quality standards. However, while attestation was focused on compliance and quantitative as well as qualitative indicators, and always concerned the whole HEI at an institutional level, accreditation was conducted at institutional as well as at study program level. The most significant different was that both state and independent accreditation were voluntary, paid for by the HEIs themselves, and were improvement-oriented, more qualitative peer assessment exercises. State Accreditation was carried out by the National Accreditation Center (NAC) between 2005 and 2011 when it was discontinued.

Risk assessment and unscheduled controls by the CCES

Based on a number of indicators such as accreditation, compliance with state educational standards, number of full-time staff, material and technical base, external assessment of learning achievements of students and the results of inspections, complaints by students or employers, the Committee for Control (CCES) places HEIs in categories of high, average or insignificant risk (EACEA, 2012b). In cases of

"high risk" the committee conducts unscheduled controls (*neplanovaya proverka*). The Committee on control can likewise conduct licensing controls (*litsensionnaya proverka*) to verify whether the HEI is in compliance with the licensing requirements. These controls may for example concern the licensing and qualification requirements, the compliance with admittance regulations, or financial management.

12.2.3.1.3 Independent (international) Accreditation

The 2007 law on education had reintroduced accreditation as a voluntary option for HEIs but had not attached any formal recognition to it. Nevertheless, in 2008, anticipating the growing role for accreditation after Kazakhstan's accession to the Bologna Process, the *Independent Quality assurance Agency* (IQAA) was founded by Sholpan Kalanova - the former director of NAC - and conducted its first reviews.

In March 2010, Kazakhstan signed the Bologna Declaration. One of the so-called "action lines" of the Process was quality assurance and the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* had been developed as a common basis for quality assurance in the EHEA.

The State Program on Education Development for 2011-2020 (SPED2011-2020) was passed in 2010 and in 2011, state accreditation was discontinued. On the basis of the former NAC, the *Independent Agency for Accreditation Rating* (IAAR) was founded in 2011. In addition, Only HEIs which had successfully passed institutional accreditation by a recognized accreditation agency would be eligible to enroll students on state grants and HEIs which had passed accreditation, would be exempted from state attestation (EACEA, 2012b).

Since 2015, in order to be recognized, accreditation agencies needed to be full members of the international networks of quality assurance (INQAAHE, ENQA, APQN). As of 2016, there were two Kazakh (IQAA and IAAR) and eight international Quality Assurance Agencies (QAAs) licensed to conduct accreditations in Kazakhstan. In 2017, attestation has been fully discontinued and only (voluntary) accreditation remains.

12.2.3.1.4 Comprehensive National Mid-Term Test

The perceived low standards of many universities motivated the MoES in 2003 a national "Comprehensive National Mid-Term Tests" (*vneshnaya otsenka uchebnhkh dostizhenii - VOUD*) after the second year of studies, in which students would are assessed on the compulsory basic disciplines as by the state standards (World Bank & OECD, 2007). If students do not reach a minimal level of knowledge, they are not allowed to continue their studies in the third year. The VOUD is operated by the CCES. Low performance on the VOUD is a risk indicator and can trigger an unscheduled control by the CCES.

12.2.3.1.5 Information provision – National rankings

In 2006, Sholpan Kalanova, then director of the National Accreditation Center, published the first ranking of Kazakh HEIs. *The Independent Kazakhstan Quality Assurance Agency for Education* (IQAA) continued to develop and conduct yearly rankings of higher education institutions of Kazakhstan[132].

[132] http://nkaoko.kz/en/ranking-of-heis/ranking-of-higher-education-institutions-of-kazakhstan-2015

Since 2013, the *Independent Agency for Accreditation Rating (IAAR)* is conducting a separate yearly national ranking of HEIs[133].

Students and employers pay increasing attention to ranking results when applying to universities (Interview KZ No. 20, 2017). Local authorities such as *Akimats* also pay attention to rankings when assigning additional funding to HEIs from local budgets (Interview KZ No. 14, 2017)

12.2.3.2 Regulation of admission into higher education

Regulation of access via the Unified National Test *(Edinoe Nacional'noe Testirovanie – UNT)*

Prior to 1999, each HEI held their entrance examinations to admit students to their programs. Since 1999 these exams were replaced with a Unified National Test (*Edinoe Nacional'noe Testirovanie - UNT*). In 2004, they also replaced both school-leaving examinations and became obligatory for all school graduates as a single high-stakes test.

The UNT is conducted simultaneously in all of Kazakhstan as a three-hour-long exam administered to all 11th grade students. It covers five subjects, including the student's mother tongue (Kazakh or Russian), Kazakh history, the language of instruction, mathematics and 'profile' subject which is chosen by the student based on their future study orientation.

The MoES sets a minimal required cut-off score for admission into higher education. HEIs may not accept students with values below this value, but may, as is typically the case for very prestigious private HEIs, set a higher entry requirement. When the UNT was first introduced, the pass score was set at 40 out of 120. In 2006 it was raised to 50 and further increases are periodically discussed. Students often prepare themselves for the UNT during the final two years of secondary education and private tutoring is widespread among those families who can afford it financially (OECD, 2017).

Until 2017 the UNT was administered by the *Committee for Control in the field of education and science (CCES)* and the *National Centre of State Standards and Testing*, as it was regarded as a form of control. Since 2017, school graduation exams were conducted separately from the UNT again, uncoupling the functions of university entrance and school leaving exam. For those students wishing to receive a state grant, both their UNT as well as their school leaving scores are taken into consideration.

The Complex test (CT)

Students who have failed the UNT, have graduated prior to the UNT's introduction, graduates of initial and secondary vocational schools, graduates of secondary schools who have studied abroad and others may take an equivalent exam called the Complex Test (CT). Students who have failed the UNT may

[133] http://www.iaar.kz/en/ratingi/ranking-of-heis-2017

take the CT at the earliest one year later. The number of students taking the CT rose from 29,141 in 2011 to 78,248 in 2015. In 2015, around half of test-takers failed the CT (OECD, 2017).

Regulation of the number of students in study programs

The MoES only determines the number of grants per study program for the entire country. While there are no formal criteria which assign an upper limit to the number of admitted students, the SES and qualification requirements include norms regarding the necessary infrastructure per number of students.

12.2.3.3 Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

Internal governance of HEIs

Since independence, the governance structures of higher education in Kazakhstan have been highly centralized and dependent upon the government.

Each HEI is headed by a rector and various deputy and vice-rectors. Until the implementation of boards of overseers (*nablyudatel'nye sovety)* in 2016, in state HEIs the rector was the final authority regarding strategy, personnel and financial questions. He/she still is the ultimate authority in everyday management of the HEI. While the rector is the managing authority, he or she is also the chairperson of the Academic (Scientific) Council as a collegial body composed of academic staff, administrative staff students, and representatives of public bodies. The composition of the Academic Council is prescribed by bylaws approved by the government but its members are elected according to institution-specific rules. Academic Councils can sometimes have up to 100 members, with an average of 65-70 per university (EACEA, 2012b), which makes them rather large. Before the implementation of boards of overseers, they were formally responsible for approving the structure of an HEI, its charter/statute, approving development plans and evaluating reports of the institution's leaderships. Due to the size the academic councils and them being chaired by rectors, power in state HEIs was until 2016 usually highly concentrated in the hand of the rector, which has "in many cases resulted in their domination over major institutional decisions, with low levels of transparency and collegiality" (Bilyalov, 2016) with university councils acting "either as a formal "rubber stamp" or as an advisory body to the rector" (Bilyalov, 2016). Universities in the legal form of joint-stock companies always had a council of directors as a governing boards taking final decisions on a lot of matters.

Appointment of rectors and accountability to the MoES

Until 2016, the rectors of public HEIs were nominated by the Government based on the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) while the rectors of national HEIs are nominated by the President of Kazakhstan directly. Deputy rectors are nominated by rectors and approved by the MoES. Since 2016, the boards of overseers (*nablyudatel'nye sovety)* play a stronger role in the vetting and selection of potential rectors, although the final decision is still taken by a government committee.

Within the election and appointment process of rectors, particular attention is paid to the strategic development plans which exist on different levels in the state: The fundamental document informing state policy are the national State Programs for Educational Development which have been updated every five years since 2005. Based on the SPED, the MoES formulates its own goals, development strategy and road map. The MoES tries to coordinate its own development plans with University Development Strategies. Since 2016, Rectors are required to apply with their own development strategy. One of the criteria the "Republican Commission on the selection of rectors" uses in taking its decisions, is the degree to which the proposed university development strategies help to realize the wider MoES Strategy.

After appointment, each rector has to provide a yearly public account on the HEI's activities. Likewise once per year rectors need to present a report on financial accounting and the implementation of the university's development strategy to the "large commission" of the MoES (*bol'shaya komissiya*) which is made up of the heads of departments, the vice-minister and the responsible secretary.

Boards of trustees and boards of overseers (*popechitel'skie sovety* and *nablyudatel'nye sovety*) in state HEIs

The State Program of education development for 2011-2020 (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan[MoES], 2010) foresees granting more institutional autonomy to state HEIs by establishing Boards of Trustees through involving employers, public bodies, parents and learners and implementing principles of corporate management in HEIs (EACEA, 2012b). It was planned to grant "full autonomy" to national research universities by 2015, to other national higher education institutions by 2016 and to all other HEIs by 2018 (EACEA, 2012b). It is also foreseen to replace the appointment of rectors with elections by boards.

In 2007, the first boards of trustees were instituted. Such boards were established at virtually all public HEIs within a few years. Since rectors were not accountable to the boards, however, boards had no say over budgetary matters, and as Bilyalov (2016) pointed out, board by-laws – defined by the HEIs themselves – in almost all cases allowed them merely to suggest, discuss, and advise, thus withholding any real formal authority, making them sounding boards and forums for consultation with employers and the regional community rather than governing boards.

In 2012, the government reacted to this state of affairs and introduced "boards of overseers" with clearly stated responsibilities guaranteed under the Law on State Assets that regulates public universities. Since 2016, their powers formally include selecting and proposing candidates for rector, approving budgets; defining strategy and admissions criteria, creating faculty hiring policies, and even set the senior leadership team's salaries (Bilyalov, 2016).

Joint-Stock HEIs always had boards of directors as highest decision-making organs.

Autonomy of HEIs

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, State HEIs in Kazakhstan have increasingly gained organizational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy, albeit in small steps. One notable exemption is Nazarbayev University which is governed by its own law and has substantial autonomy in all areas. Certain national universities also enjoy greater autonomy. Private HEIs enjoy more autonomy as their founders can appoint their own rectors and they own land and buildings, and can purchase equipment and learning materials independent of the MoES (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

The following situation describes HEI autonomy in 2017: In terms of **organizational autonomy,** state HEIs may establish internal structures and processes, and develop and approve certain internal regulations. They may not select their own executive head. They manage their facilities and equipment but may not sell or mortgage their property. In terms of **financial autonomy,** state HEIs have their own budgets and freedom to spend them within the parameters established by the ministry. They may establish salary scales, additional payments, premiums and bonuses, other payments to staff within the limits of their own financial resources. provide goods and services in line with their license on a fee-basis. They may source additional financial and material resources to implement activities in line with their license. In terms of **staffing autonomy,** state HEIs can appoint and dismiss all staff below the level of vice-rectors. They are limited by qualifications requirements spelled which are necessary to receive a license. **Academic autonomy** for both public and private HEIs is limited by state standards and accreditation. HEIs may determine the elective components of curricula. They may introduce new study programs foreseen in the state classified but require a government license to do so. HEIs may set a higher minimal score of UNT results in student admission but they are required to accept to enroll any students carrying a state grant.

12.2.3.4 Financing of HEIs

Kazakhstani HEIs derive their funding primarily from four sources: From the state via state-funded study places, from tuition via fee-paying students, from special government programs (such as for inviting foreign professors or equipping new laboratories), and from private & state funded R&D contracts and other paid services (limited by legislation), from loans, sponsoring, donations and grants (EACEA, 2012b). Income from tuition fees plays the most significant role for Kazakhstan's HEIs, through almost universal cost sharing in public universities and colleges, the large size of the private HE market and the partial privatization of public universities (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

Public HEIs	**Private HEIs**
Tuition Fees	Tuition Fees
Grants for Operational Expenses (Voucher Scheme)	Grants for Operational Expenses (Voucher Scheme)
	Grants from State programs (e.g. for mobility)

Investment Funds from the government and grants from State programs (e.g. for mobility)
Research Funds from the government

Table 25: Sources of Funding for Public and Private TEIs in Kazakhstan (Source: OECD/World Bank 2007)

These four sources of income will be presented in more detail in the following paragraph.

State Funding via educational grants

Between independence and 1999, state funding for HEIs was distributed via line-item budget transfers that were drawn up yearly by the MoES for each HEI, based on an estimate of each HEI's need (based mostly on historical funding) and a process of negation between the MoES and each HEI.

In 1999, the government replaced the former system of state funding with voucher-like education grants which were awarded to high achieving students who chose to apply to study programs for which there are grants available. Students become eligible for state grants on the basis of their scores on the Unified National Test (UNT) or the Complex Test (CT). Using their test results, they apply for a grant in a certain study program. The grants themselves consist of a sum covering tuition fees as well as a living stipend. Furthermore, these grants are portable, so long as students choose to study a grant-carrying subject.

In May of each year, the "Republican Commission on distribution of educational grants" (*respublikanskaya komisiya po razpredeleniyu gosudarstvennih obrazovatel'nih grantov*), a committee of the department of higher and post-graduate education at the MoES, consisting of rectors of HEIs, representatives of Ministries and trade unions (EACEA, 2012b) announces the "state-educational order" (*gosudarstvenno-obrazovatel'nyy zakaz*). The order establishes the number of grants per field of study, based on an assessment of demand for certain specializations. After graduation, in June or July, school-leavers take the UNT, also choosing a subject in which they want to participate in a nation-wide competition for state grants. Based on their UNT results, grants are then awarded to the highest-scoring students in each field of study. The successful students can then enroll to any HEI of their choice into the field of study for which they were awarded a state grants. The students that were not successful in securing a grant may also enroll at any university on a tuition-basis, if they reached the minimum required number of points on the UNT. Finally, on September 1, all HEIs report the number of grant-carrying students they have enrolled to the MoES and are awarded the corresponding state grants.

While students can freely choose a university, in practice, most chose to enroll in HEIs with the highest prestige. In 2011, only 85 out of 146 HEIs were awarded state education grants (EACEA, 2012b). In addition, since 2011, only accredited HEIs may enroll grant-carrying students.

From the economic perspective of HEIs, state funding represents a substitution for student tuition fees. For some very prestigious HEIs, enrolling grant-carrying students may economically not even be the most profitable choice, as they may charge higher tuition from self-paying students. HEIs, however, are generally very interested to attract grant-holding students, which is as much a source of funding as it is a sign of prestige (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

The system sets clear incentives for universities to strive to be attractive to the best students. HEIs confirm that the grant-financing mechanism is one reason why they pay great attention to national and international rankings (Interview KZ No. 17, 2017; Interview KZ No. 6, 2017).

It should be noted, however, that in 2017, HEIs still did not have the financial autonomy to use income from state grants as they saw fit. While the overall funding is allocated to HEIs on the basis of state-funded students, the MoES still allocates it on a line-item level. HEIs thus cannot re-allocate funds to other areas strategically and provides little incentive to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their use (Hartley, Gopaul et al., 2016). Thus, paradoxically, HEIs in Kazakhstan generate most of their income independently of government funds (via tuition fees), yet, have limited control over how this money is spent. At the same time, neither public nor private HEIs are required to be audited independently (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

Income from tuition fees

Income from tuition fees represents the most significant part of HEIs income and Kazakhstan has become one of the countries with the highest level of private funding worldwide (World Bank & OECD, 2007). In 2011, only 20 % of the students received state grants while 80 % of the overall budget of HEIs came from tuition (EACEA, 2012b). This is only slightly down from 2004/2005, when 84% of students self-financed their studies (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

Tuition fees per student may not be lower than state grants. As an (likely unintended) consequence of this constraint, any increase in state grant size currently automatically increases the minimal tuition fees, making higher education less accessible to fee-paying students. Some HEIs, especially in the economically less developed South of the country, sometimes do not comply with this requirement and do set lower tuition fees (Interview KZ No. 16, 2017).

The MoES further establishes minimum amounts that universities should spend per student on providing courses. Many universities regard these rates as fees they should charge students (World Bank & OECD, 2007), although they are free to charge higher fees up to a maximum set by the MoES (Alpysbayeva & Akhmetzhanova, 2016). HEIs may independently decide how many fee-paying students they accept, as long as they dispose of the corresponding infrastructure.

Income from federal programs and grants

For the vast majority of HEIs, fees from students (out-of-pocket or via state scholarships) represent the only, for all HEIs the most significant source of funding.

As in other countries, the government may provide special funding through strategic development programs or to support individual HEIs in the realization of their mission. Often such funds (e.g. for large-scale renovations or expensive equipment) are allocated by the republican budget commission (*respublikanskaya byudzhetnaya komissiya*). A small number of leading universities such as the public national universities, the private Kazakh British Technical University and Nazarbayev University, particularly benefit from the allocation of additional resources. These take the forms of higher student grants, additional funding for facilities and equipment, funding for the recruitment of foreign visiting professors or privileged access to research grants and contracts directly or via linked research institutes (World Bank & OECD, 2007). The allocation of these additional funds to HEIs is often based on ministerial decisions, rather than on open competitions (World Bank & OECD, 2007) and the criteria for the distribution of these resources are not in an apparent way related to performance indicators of the receiving institutions or of their proposals (Makridi et al., 2007)

Except in the case of certain joint-stock universities, private HEIs must earn virtually all their money through student tuition. Research funding is very low in absolute as well as in relative terms, standing at 0.18% of GDP in 2013 (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2017). Of the public funding that exists for R&D activities, only less than a third is directed to HEIs, the rest going to research institutes (World Bank & OECD, 2007).

12.3 Annex 3: Moldova – The governance of the higher education system[134]

12.3.1 Moldova: Structure of the higher education system

12.3.1.1 Structure of the education system in the Republic of Moldova

Study programs are divided into professional "*specialties*", which are further divided into "*specializations*". The graduates receive a Diploma of License (I. cycle), which gives access to Master degree, or Diploma of Master (II. cycle), which gives access to doctoral study in a certain subject area. After joining the Bologna Process in 2005 Moldova reorganized its higher education system, around a two-cycle degree system by 2011 (Turcan, R. V. et al., 2015, p. 19), consisting of Bachelor's (*Diploma de Licență*) and Master's degrees (*Diploma de Master*). The duration of university studies was reduced from 5 years (specialist education) to 4 years (Bachelor's Degree) and 2 years (Master's degree). Study programs can be organized either as day, evening or extramural programs and the duration of studies is 4-6 years, depending on the specialization and type of degree: first cycle lasts from three to four years and second cycle lasts from one to two years. Higher education finalizes with graduation exams and a Diploma thesis.

[134] Disclaimer: In this section I am using ideas and formulations which have been published in Tofan & Bischof (2016)

The 2014 new Code of education (Republica Moldova Parlamentul, 2014) extends the cycles of tertiary education introducing the cycle III: Higher Education/PhD. Doctoral studies remain separated into two stages: *Doctor* and *Doctor Habilitate*. Doctoral programs last from three to four years of study and research activity, completed by the public defense of an original research work (thesis). *Doctor Habilitate* is the postdoctoral study and represents the highest scientific degree conferred in all fields, for the original scientific contribution, completed also by the public defense of doctor habilitate thesis.

12.3.1.2 Size and growth of the higher education system

Private and public higher education in Moldova

Until 1989 all HEIs of the MSSR had been state institutions and exclusively funded by state. In 1989 the first groups of students were enrolled on a tuition basis in a special English-language engineering and technical program designed as a private entity within an existing state institutions at the Polytechnic Institute in Chisinau[135]. In September 1992 the first two private educational institutions opened their doors in Chisinau almost simultaneously – the University of Humanities and the Free International University of Moldova (Galben & Cogan, 2003, pp. 28–30). This marked the actual start of a process of institutional diversification of the national higher education system. By 2000 the number of private HEIs had risen to 32 vs. only 15 public ones and the small country had a total 47 different HEIs.

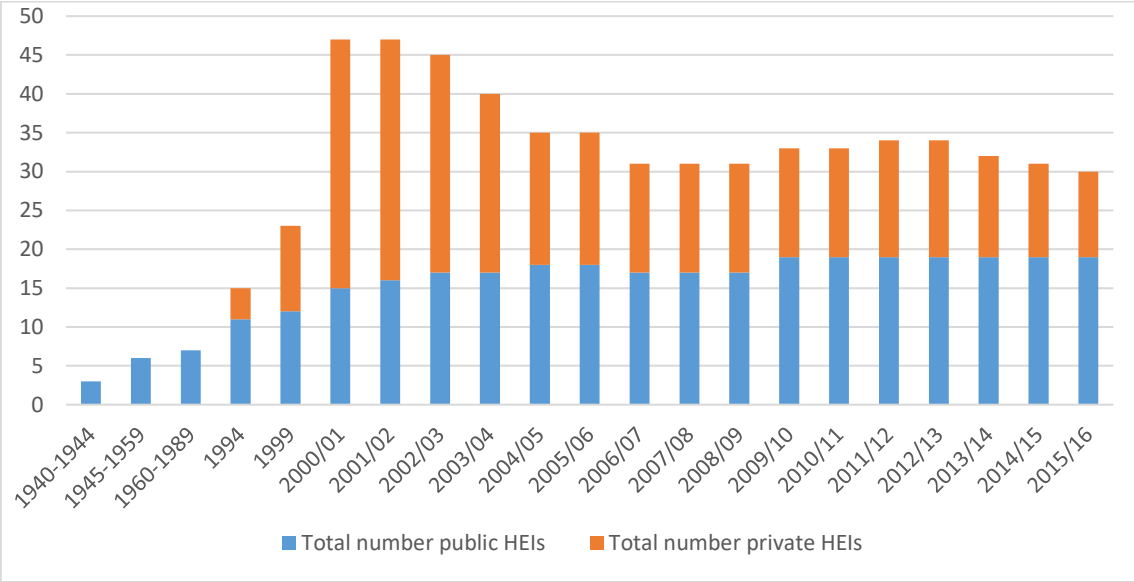

Figure 23: Number of public and private HEIs in the Republic of Moldova

[135]The initiator of this first initiative was professor Ion Groza, who in the past had benefited of a series of fellowships in the United States, France and United Kingdom. On the basis of these first two students groups the first private higher education institutional structure had been created by an official Government decision within the auspices of a public institution. However, this private sub-division (named as „private university") of a public university existed for only three years and had to suspend its activity because of legal contradictions and the personal opposition of the university administration.

The emergence in 1990s of private HE as an alternative to public HE was a response to the pressures of socio-economic and political demand and new opportunities at a time of rapid economic and social change. The institutional mission of the first private HEIs was to train specialists for the market-oriented economy and under (new) conditions of the market-oriented economy. Over the years the environment which generated the transformations of HES has changed as has the strategic focus of many private HEIs. Only one private HEI (The Free International University of Moldova) corresponds to the profile of a „classical" comprehensive university. The rest of the private sector seems to be guided primarily by economic considerations which seem to be the decisive factor in establishing new graduate degree programs.

Also state HEIs, however, changed their behavior in similar ways as did private ones. The Law of Education (1995) provided that state education is generally tuition free ("free of charge"), but in fact insufficient state funding forced HEIs to find new sources of income to fill this gap (Secrieru, 2007, pp. 12–14). State HEIs did this since 1993-1994 by enrolling students on a "contract basis", which required those students to pay tuition fees. The following graph illustrates these developments:

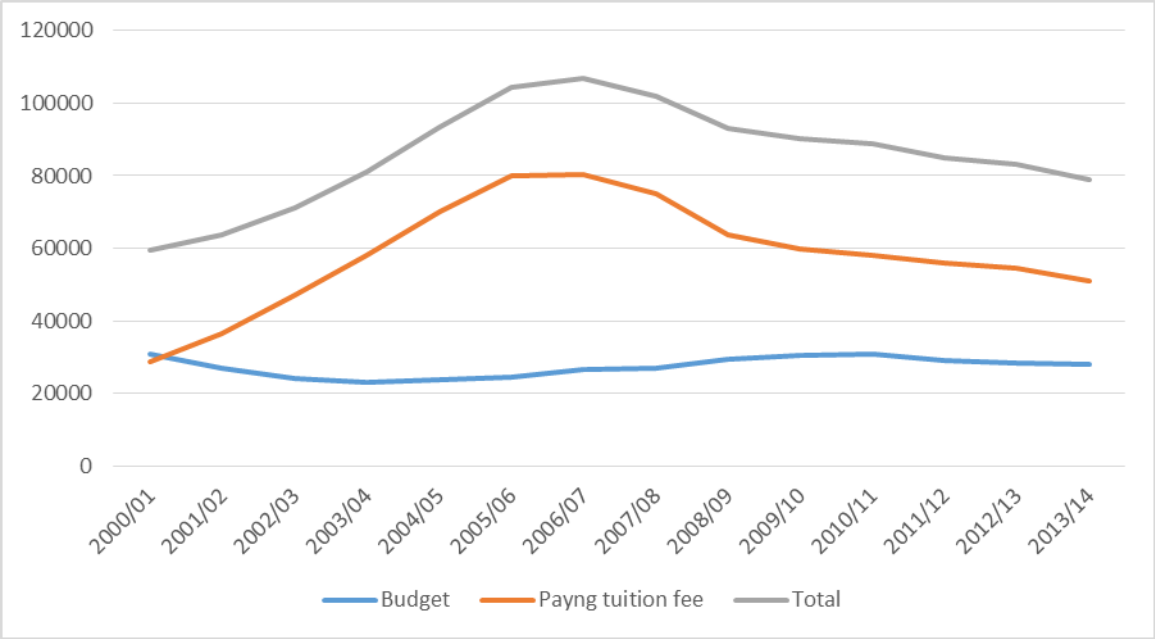

Figure 3: Development of the total number of students enrolled on a budget and tuition-fee basis (in both private and public HEIs)

As of 2015/2016, there were 30 HEIs in operation in Moldova, 19 of them state institutions and 11 private institutions. However, not all universities received official accreditation. The Moldovan Ministry of Education lists 29 universities in the country, of which 18 are state universities and 11 are private[136].

[136] http://www.edu.gov.md/ro/content/institutiile-de-invatamant-superior last accessed 2016/2/19

In the 2013-2014 academic year, private HEIs in Moldova made up 39% of the total number of HEIs while only enrolling around 20% of all students. Their role is thus comparatively modest.

12.3.2 Actors and their capabilities

After independence, the higher education system in Moldova consisted of only those HEIs, which had existed at the dissolution of the USSR, as well as the Moldovan branch of the Soviet Academy of Science. In this chapter, an overview is given on the actors which emerged and constitute the institutional landscape of the Moldovan higher education system by 2015.

12.3.2.1 State Actors

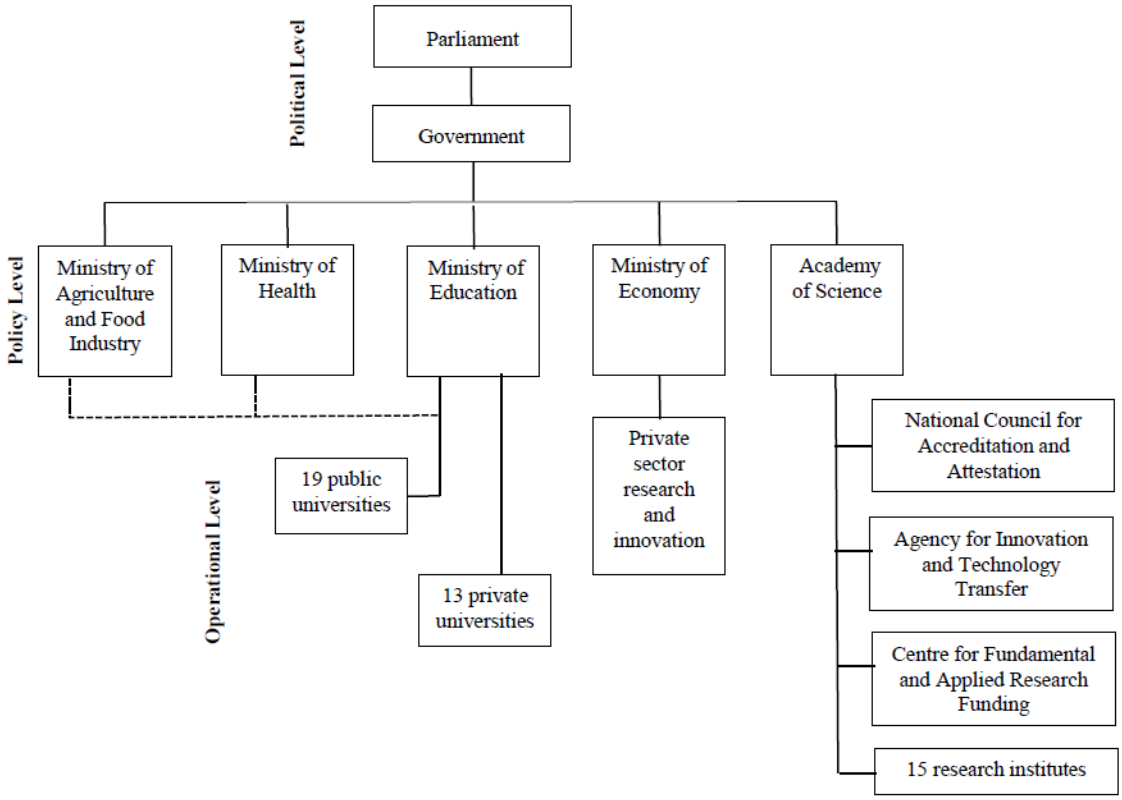

Figure 24: Structure of the Moldovan HE and Research sector in 2014 (Source: Ţurcan & Buhaian, 2014)

The *Ministry of Education* (MoE) was founded in 1990. It is responsible for formulating educational policy and monitoring its implementation. All HEIs are subordinated to a particular ministry and most are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, with some specialized institutions being subordinated to different respective "branch ministries". The MoE is responsible for higher education policy development, the recognition of degrees, and the final approval of all decisions regarding evaluation and accreditation. In addition, the MoE determines admission rules and sets quotas for the allowed number of

students for each HEI[137], both for state-funded as well as tuition-based places. As of 2015, according to the 2014 code of education, the quality in higher education at the national level is to be ensured by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP). In practice ANACIP had not started to take up its work and the MoE remains the key actor in the governance of the higher education system in Moldova.

The *Government of the Republic of Moldova* is responsible for the confirmation of almost all decisions taken by the MoE, which it decides upon by vote. The president of the *Moldovan Academy of Sciences (ASM) is an ex-officio* member of the government, responsible for research, which gives him a strong degree of influence in the system.

The *Moldovan Academy of Sciences (ASM)* inherited the research institutes of the Moldovan branch of the Soviet Academy of Science. The ASM is the decisive actor in the R&D system in Moldova. It is the main policy-making institution on R&D in Moldova and the president of the ASM is *ex-officio* a member of the Government. While the Moldovan Government is responsible for approving the R&D budget, the ASM distributes it through two agencies, the Agency for Innovation and Technology Transfer (AITT) for innovation funding and the Centre for Fundamental and Applied Research Funding (CFCFA) for public funding. Research managed by the ASM is conducted in institutes of the ASM, as well as its affiliated public and private universities and a few private companies that perform research activities. The ASM is therefore simultaneously the main policy-making body, funding body and recipient of this funding, of which it takes the lion's share. Over three quarters of all Gross Domestic Expenditure on R&D is performed in the research institutes of ASM, whereas R&D in universities and businesses stands at 11.6% and 11.3% respectively (Cuciureanu, 2014, p. 8). This conflict of interests creates perpetual tension and conflicts with Moldova's universities, which feel that their development is hampered by the ASM's control of and quasi-monopoly on research. The ASM is politically well connected and has a high degree of centrality in the political sphere. As one interviewee points out:

> *The Academy of Science has tradition. In Moldova it kept the status it already had in the Soviet Union as a center of scientific preparation of leaders etc. It is difficult to change its status because a large number of people who hold these scientific degrees, such as doctor habilitat, all attempts to change the academy of science are perceived as attempts to attack them and their privileges which they have because of their degrees […] such as bonuses to their salaries and a lot less teaching hours." (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)*

The *National Council on Accreditation and Attestation (Consiliul Naţional pentru Acreditare şi Atestare – CNAA)* is a quality assurance body responsible for university research and scientific and academic titles, which was created in 1999. CNAA is a governmental body, responsible for the evaluation and accreditation of HEIs as research organizations, for recognizing diplomas and certificates issued by

[137] Based on a plan of projected labor force needs which is developed by the Ministry of Economy

public authorities of other states, as well as for conferring scientific degrees and titles to highly qualified staff. The most important substructures are the department and the commission for evaluation and accreditation; the department and commission for attestation; and the department for doctorate policy and monitoring. Accreditation by CNAA is a precondition for HEIs to receive State funding for research by becoming partner or affiliated institutes of the Academy of Science.

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (Agenţia Naţională de Asigurare a Calităţii în Învățământul Profesional - ANACIP) is the national Moldovan quality assurance agency and was created in 2014-2015. ANACIP is intended as an independent agency responsible for authorization and accreditation of institutions and study programs in higher and vocational accreditation. According to the 2014 code on education, its tasks include the authorization and accreditation of study programs and institutions in vocational, higher and continuous education. Its decisions as well as its methodology require government approval to enter into force. Likewise, while ANACIP develops its own methodology of assessment and accreditation of the institutions which is approved by the Government. When ANACIP was founded in 2015, all of its staff and the majority of its governing council consisted of persons who had been trained within the TEMPUS QUAEM project.

12.3.2.2 Stakeholder Organizations

The *Moldovan Council of Rectors (Consiliul Rectorilor din Republica Noldova – CNRCM),* founded in 1997, is a public non-governmental organization, which unites the rectors of 27 state and private higher education institutions. It is funded by its member universities in relation to their student enrolment. The Council of Rectors is a discussion and lobbying organization where university rectors can discuss developments and coordinate their position. The Council of Rectors has a high degree of centrality in the higher education system in Moldova, because typically, all proposals which are developed in the MoE are submitted to the Council of rectors for discussion (Interview MD No. 10, 2016). The president of the Council of rectors, as a rule, is also a member of the College of the Minister of Education. In addition, the Council has also developed into a point of liaison for the national TEMPUS office. Likewise, the results of international projects are frequently presented and discussed in here.

The *European Union* has played an important role in shaping the development of the higher education system in the country. Moldova joined the European Union's TEMPUS program in 1994 and a total of 83 projects were developed until 2013, worth about 43 million Euro (National Erasmus+ Office in Moldova, 2016). The program's focus was primarily on university management, curriculum development, and training teaching staff. In the period between 2006 and 2015 there were six projects related to internal and external quality assurance, accreditation, and the development of qualification frameworks. According to the EU's impact study, the TEMPUS program had become a key instrument for university reform in Moldova which was used to explore and test elements of the Bologna Process before they were implemented at the national level (European Commission, 2012).

Other International organizations also played an important role in the development of higher education by funding scientific publications, international conferences, curricula modernization and research travel grants (Padure, 2009b). The **Soros Foundation** was active especially during the second half of the 1990s and continually increased its budget, from annually USD 1 million in 1993, to 8.3 million in 1998 (Padure, 2009b). The **Council of Europe** sporadically organized seminars, mainly upon the request of the Moldovan Ministry of Education. Topics were quality assurance and qualifications frameworks. Often, these activities happened in cooperation with the European Training Foundation. The **World Bank** has been an important international agency in supporting projects in reforming pre-tertiary education. It did not play a large role in higher education reform in Moldova.

Different European nations contributed to support reforms and institution-building. Regarding quality assurance, two noteworthy examples have been the capacity building projects for the new Quality Assurance Agency ANACIP between 2014 and 2016 which were supported by the governments of Romania and Estonia. The government of Romania in particular has provided experts and funding for exchanges and capacity building on several occasions.

12.3.3 Instruments of higher education governance in Moldova

12.3.3.1 Educational Standards and Quality Assurance

During the Soviet period, there was almost no academic autonomy. Curricula, text books, teaching materials, the format of assessment, etc. was centrally prepared and prescribed for all universities to follow. The increased academic autonomy or, in other words, the absence of any regulations at the end of the Soviet period meant that Moldovan universities had to develop the capacity to develop their own study plan, quality assurance mechanisms, etc. At the beginning of the transition period universities continued "by inertia" (Interview MD No. 8, 2016). Then, step by step, new instruments for quality assurance were introduced until by 2015, the Moldovan system quality assurance framework had developed a number of mechanisms and instruments which will be discussed in this chapter.

12.3.3.1.1 State Educational Standards

Until 1996, there were no official standards governing the structure and contents of study programs. Most universities, however, continued to use the old contents "by inertia" (Interview MD No. 8, 2016).This situation was codified in 1996 when the original Soviet study plans and norms for teaching loads were translated into Romanian and entered into force as Moldovan standards (Interview MD No. 10, 2016). This situation remained until 2000, when a framework plan (plan cadru) was issued. After Moldova joined the Bologna Process in 2005, the standards were subsequently revised to include Master's, and PhD degrees as well as reformulated to correspond to the *ECTS user's guide*. As of 2015, the range of State Standards encompasses structural standards (*plan cadru*), subject-specific content and competence standards (*national qualifications framework*), and accreditation standards.

Common study domain nomenclature (*Nomenclatorul domeniilor de formare profesională şi al specialităţilor*)

The domain nomenclature for study programs assigns a code for each "specialty" (study program) and situates it in an educational and professional domain. It was launched in 1998 in its first variant and was adapted in 2009 to correspond to the EUROStat classification of study programs (Interview MD No. 10, 2016). The nomenclature is used for statistical and planning purposes and for planning the number of state-funded (*budgetnye*) study places.

Framework plan for higher studies (*Planul-cadru pentru studii superioare – plan cadru*)

The framework plan for higher studies defines common features for study programs in Moldova. It contains general provisions on issues such as the structure and contents of study plans, the length of the academic year, the use of ECTS, types of student assessment and on other structural issues. It also contains a provisions on the number and type of obligatory modules to be taught in all Bachelor level study programs (which include, for example, foreign language, IT, Romanian language, professional ethics, and physical education). It also specifies the percentage-wise distribution of general, specialized and applied subjects.

The *Plan Cadru* as a document first appeared in 2000 (Interview MD No. 10, 2016). Before that the original Soviet study plans in their Romanian-language version were the only documents regulating higher education. In 2005 it was reworked to include ECTS and in 2007 and 2014 respectively, provisions for Master's and doctoral programs were added. For the Master's and PhD level, obligatory modules are formulated more broadly.

The *plan cadru* also makes quite detailed descriptions about HEI-internal processes, for example on the steps a new study program needs to pass within the university in order to be approved in the final step by the MoE or – according to the 2014 code of education – by ANACIP[138].

Subject-specific qualifications frameworks (*Plan Cadru Național al Calificărilor Învățământ Superior*)

Since 2006/2007, Moldova has worked on developing a so-called "National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education" (*Cadrul National al Calificarilor Învăţământ Superior*)[139]. Not to be confused with the overarching national qualification framework currently in development (see below), the *cadru national* represents subject-specific standards, intended to ensure the transparency in the higher education, academic mobility and recognition of diplomas at the international level (Education code of the Republic of Moldova, 2015). On the context of their development, one respondent pointed to the need for common standards for popular disciplines:

[138] As of June 2016, however, this was still done by the MoE

[139] An example can be found here: http://edu.gov.md/sites/default/files/cnc_22_31_32_33_34_38_42_44_55_85.pdf

"Economic specialties were very high in demand among students and practically all students tried to realize training in these specialties. […] These programs [sometimes did not] have anything in common. […] And in order to assure at the very least the core parts [of study programs], there should be a framework which all HEIs which are offering these programs are obliged to respect, in order for at least 50% of the results to be common, while there remains a field for the autonomy of HEIs" (Interview MD No. 10, 2016)

The *cadru national* prescribes certain mandatory elements regarding the structure, contents and intended learning outcomes for the respective study domain. Study programs have to correspond to these standards. As of 2014, the contents of these subject-specific QF include: a description of the professional fields of employment; description of qualifications and occupations; c) generic and specific competences as intended learning outcomes; level descriptors by higher education cycles (BA/MA/PhD) with associated workload in ECTS; a list of BA-level modules and how they contribute to individual intended learning outcomes/competences; teaching, learning and assessing methods; and procedures for quality assurance in higher education.

The subject-specific qualification framework is officially developed by the Ministry of Education and then approved by the Government. In practice, the standards are elaborated by groups of academics and professionals from the field and then approved by the ministry and the government. The Ministry of Education maintains a National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education, which contains all subject-specific QFs. According to the 2014 code of education, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP) is to be responsible for the development of the QFs. As of 2016, they elaboration is still, however, to be coordinated with the relevant ministries (in most cases the MoE).

Overarching National Qualifications Framework in the Republic of Moldova

Semantically almost identical, but independent from the *Cadrul National al Calificarilor Învăţământ Superior*, the National Qualifications Framework is part of the commitments Moldova entered with its accession to the Bologna Process in 2005. Its development between 2005 and 2015 has been rather slow. In 2010, a concept on an 8-level NQF was adopted[140], but not implemented except for in the area of higher education. In 2013, with the support of the European Training Foundation (ETF) – and a corresponding EU grants – a concept focusing on VET and lifelong learning was developed to update the 2010 concept. As of 2015, the situation is unclear. The subject-specific qualifications frameworks (see above) are developed quite independently from those in the area of VET. According to the 2014 code of education, the *Cadrul National al Calificarilor Învăţământ Superior* represents the higher education section of the National qualifications framework[141]. However, the relationship between the two NQF's – for higher education and for VET and lifelong learning – as of 2015 was rather unclear and it is not

[140] Ministerial Order no. 934 of 29.12.2010
[141] NQF HE approved by Ministerial Order no. 968 of 10 September 2014

clear, whether or how they will be integrated. The elaboration of NQF started by the Ministry of Education Decision from October 2006 and was approved by decision of the Ministry of Education Council at 24.12.2010.

12.3.3.1.2 Assessment

Licensing of HEIs

Since 1995 private HEIs needed to receive a license from the MoE to take up operations. This license was granted on the basis of a government decision. Between 2001 and 2010, the responsibility for the licensing of all education activities (kindergardens, schools, universities) was transferred to the Licensing chamber of Moldova under the Ministry of Economy before it was transferred back to the MoE[142] in 2010.

Provisional authorization of study programs

Since 1995, before HEIs could offer a study program, it needed to receive provisional authorization from the Ministry of Education. In 2015, during the authorization process, the compliance with the *plan cadru*, the qualifications frameworks and the accreditation criteria are assessed, the same criteria which also form the basis of accreditation. Changes in study programs also require authorization.

According to the 2014 code of education, HEIs require a provisional operation authorization to carry out study programs and admit students. If the authorization is refused, the government is to withdraw the HEI's license to operate or offer particular study programs until the shortcomings leading to the negative assessment results are remedied.

According to 2014 code of education, this provisional authorization[143] is to be carried out by ANACIP. As of 2016, however, the MoE continues to conduct this control.

Accreditation of institutions and study programs

Accreditation is a process of external evaluation by which an HEI receives the right to operate as an institution (institutional accreditation) or offer certain study programs (study program accreditation). During the authorization process, the compliance with the *plan cadru*, the qualifications frameworks and the accreditation criteria are assessed. Accreditation and accreditation standards were first implemented in Moldova in 1999 in a semi-independent agency, then integrated into the Ministry of Education in 2002 and ceased due to a lack of a corresponding agency in 2008. Since 2014 it is to be conducted again by the newly founded National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP).

[142] Law on the Licensing of Certain Types of Activities (2001)
[143] The 2014 code of education sometimes speaks of „authorization" and sometimes of „accreditation" referring to the process of external assessment followed by granting the right to offer study programs

According to the 2014, the decision on provisional authorization, accreditation, non-accreditation is to be adopted by the Government upon the proposal of the Ministry of Education, based on the results of the assessment performed by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP).

The process of external quality assessment is to be performed by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP) or by another quality assessment agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Verification of diplomas

Until 2014, the MoE retained the right to issue diplomas for Bachelor's and Master's degrees. Doctoral degrees were issued by CNAA. Before issuing a diplomas, the MoE checks whether the students who are to receive the diplomas have fulfilled their graduation requirements and enters the issued diploma into a diploma data base maintained by the MoE. The purpose of this process is to be able to identify falsified diplomas.

According to the 2014 code of education, accreditation grants the right to organize the graduation exam, as well as the right to issue diplomas, certificates, and other study documents recognized by the Ministry of Education. As of 2016, no such accreditation has yet been carried out and the MoE still takes care of this task.

Information provision

Information provision does not play a role as an instrument of quality assurance in the Republic of Moldova (Interview MD No. 3, 2016). According to the 2014 code of education, it is foreseen that the new quality assurance agency ANACIP will gather the data to prepare a ranking of Moldovan HEIs. As of 2016, however, no steps have yet been taken in this regard.

Regulation of admission into higher education

Access to higher education in Moldova is regulated by formal requirements (having the appropriate school leaving qualification) and a numerus clausus / numerus fixus system by which the number total study places is limited by a quota imposed by the State. Depending on the score obtained in school leaving certificates and the number of study places as determined by the state, applicants can enroll either on state-funded places or on tuition fees-based places. The share of the state funded places is considerably smaller; about one third of students are financed by the state, whereas the rest pay tuition fees (self-financed) (Ruffio, Giorgio, Gierach, & Ballart, 2012). Entrance procedures are the same for all HEIs in Moldova, regardless of ownership status.

In principle, the limitation of maximum student intake by the government, may mean that not all those who fulfill the formal requirements have a chance a chance to actually enter higher education in Moldova. In practice, since the second half of the 2000's, the demographic downturn and plentiful options

to study outside of Moldova means that even many state-funded places in certain disciplines and universities stay vacant.

State regulation of maximum student intake per discipline

Since independence, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labor each year determine the total number of study places. Based on the overall predictions of needed graduates for the national economy per field of training, the Ministry of Education then establishes the number of both state-funded (budgets) and tuition-based study places for each accredited disciplines for all study cycles (BA/MA/PhD), thus limiting the allowed student intake per year and discipline.

The rationale behind this approach is macro-steering the economy:

> *"You know, there are these tendencies in the world, that young people prefer to study fashionable disciplines. But the government needs to keep in mind the needs for specialists also in 4 years. Now it is fashionable to study law and economics, but we also need statisticians and teachers and engineers" (Interview MD No. 11, 2016)*

At the moment, this process is experienced as intransparent by HEIs.

Introduction of Centralized Testing

Already in 1990, experiments were conducted with developing the *bacalaureat* as a national centralized test for university admission, as was conducted in Romania. The firsts bacalaureat exams were held in 1996. Between between 1996 and 2005, the test was rolled out to an increasing number of *lyceums* in Moldova.

It became mandatory for *lyceum* graduates in 2006 and was operated by the *Agenţia de Evaluare şi Examinare* which later became the *Agenţia Naţională pentru Curriculum şi Evaluare*.

Until 2011, admission to higher education was possible for graduates from general secondary schools, for holders of Certificate of studies (Atestat) and for holders of *bacalaureat* Diplomas. In 2011, by ministerial order[144] the *bacalaureat* Diploma became the exclusive entry requirement for higher education. As several HEIs initially ignored this ministerial order, it became part of the new law on education of 2014.

12.3.3.2 Institutional Governance and University Autonomy

The academic, organizational, financial, and personnel autonomy of Moldovan HEIs has steadily grown over time. Internally, Moldovan universities are characterized by a high degree of centralization of power in the hands of the rector. With the 1995 law on education, the power to elect a rector was devolved to university senates. The Rector, however, is the Chair of the Senate by which he is elected. The

[144] Ministerial Order nr. 891 of 24.12.2009

rector, the vice-rectors, and a scientific secretary, together represents the senate bureau. The large size of senates (sometimes consisting of over 100 people) makes them inefficient and ineffective (Turcan, R. & Buhaian, 2014). In most Moldovan universities this leaves power relatively uncontested in the hands of the Rector and his management team.

Universities in Moldova have a relatively large degree of organizational autonomy in determining their internal structures and working relationships between and within faculties and departments. In 2013, universities received financial autonomy, notably the right to open their own bank accounts, to carry over unused funds and to use their facilities and other avenues to generate their own funds.

The government plays an important role nevertheless. Elected rectors needed to be confirmed by the MoE and the Government. By 2002, the Ministry of Education also still confirmed vice-rectors, deans, vice-deans, directors of study services, and chairpersons (Tiron et al., 2003, p. 59). The Ministry of Education needs to confirm any decisions on the establishment, restructuring and suspension of faculties as well as the Rectors once elected by the Senate. In addition, the government ministry decides on the establishment, restructuring or liquidation of universities. Such decisions are prepared by the Ministry of Education, approved by the government and need the final promulgation of the President of the Republic. Until the new code of education in 2014, collaboration agreements with foreign universities and other organizations also required the permission of the Ministry of Education.

12.3.3.3 Financing of State HEIs

Allocation of state-funded study places

Higher education is financed from a combination of public and private sources. For public HEIs, the primary source of funding are state-funded study places, the distribution of which among Moldova's many HEIs follows a multi-stage process:

The overall number of state-funded study places in Moldova is determined yearly by the government. In particular, the Ministry of labor projects the number of needed HE places based on the projected need of graduates within eight fields of training (e.g. pedagogy, economics, natural sciences). The plan is adapted to the cost per student in a certain discipline (in turn calculated based on labor costs at predetermined rates, contributions to social insurance, student scholarships and partial funding of utilities), and the possibilities of the budget. This plan is approved by the government. The universities then apply for a certain number of budget places per discipline. Afterward, the MoE distributes the number of budget places within each specialty (study program) among the accredited universities, taking into consideration their intake during the previous years (Interview MD No. 6, 2016). To the academic community, these criteria are not transparent (Cotelnic A. et al., 2014).

Income from tuition fees

In addition to public funding, all State universities supplement their budgets with income from tuition or training fees and research and development (national and international). Universities are restricted in the amount of tuition they are allowed to charge. As a matter of fact, HEIs receive more funding from state-funded study places than from tuition-funded places. The latter are attractive to maintain, however, because the uses of these funds are not predetermined by the government and universities are able to use these funds for renovations, new laboratory or research equipment. In addition, some funding is acquired through national and international research grants and other international projects (Interview MD No. 8, 2016).

Prior to 2013, HEIs had a predetermined annual budget of revenues, which had to be strictly observed. In 2013, a reform of university financial autonomy came into effect. Since 2013, universities may manage their funds independently, may carry over unused funds into the next year and collect interest on bank deposits, and are allowed to receive funding from donations, sponsorships, as well as lease and rental contracts of their property (Cotelnic A. et al., 2014).

Since 2013, the official policy is that state-funding of HEIs should be transformed into a "money-follows-students"-model based on cost-estimates for each type of study program. This funding scheme is intended to generate competition among universities (Cotelnic A. et al., 2014). As of June 2016, however, this has not happened yet.

12.4 Annex 4: The European "infrastructure" of quality assurance

Within the Framework of the Bologna Process, a number of instruments and networks were developed and endorsed by the European Ministers responsible for Higher Education. In 2001 Ministers called upon universities, national quality assurance agencies and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and corresponding bodies to establish a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice. In 2003, ministers agreed that the primary responsibility for quality assurance should lie with higher education institutions and laid down minimal elements of national quality assurance[145].

European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)

In 2005, the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)* were adopted based on these standards (ENQA, 2005a). The ESG are therefore a genuine product of the Bologna Process and were developed by a consortium of umbrella organizations of different HE stakeholder groups, the so-called "E4" (consisting of ESU, ENQA, EUA, and EURASHE). On the one hand, the ESG consider the "European dimension" by addressing aspects of internationalization, transparency and accountability while at the same time also taking into account national characteristics, aims and responsibilities for higher education (Stensaker, Harvey, Huisman, Langfeldt, & Westerheijden, 2010). The philosophy is that the ESG should establish guidelines and standards that provide a core common methodology and a small number of core standards for quality assessment while leaving enough room for national and institutional particularities.

The ESG are a set of guidelines on internal QA (ESG part 1), external QA (ESG part 3) and on QA of QAAs themselves (ESG part 3). While being more of a set of guidelines for how QA should be conducted rather than a set of standards for defining or assessing quality, the ESG introduced important new norms into European HE such as establishing that "Student assessment procedures are expected to be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes…" (ENQA, 2005a). As Enders & Westerheijden (2014) rightly point out, taking this seriously would imply a complete overhaul of the way students are assessed in the majority of HEIs in Europe. As a necessary precondition to fulfill this criterion, HEIs would not be able any more to confine the definition of intended learning outcomes to a paper exercise, as they would be needed for the examination process. This seemingly innocuous detail in an otherwise procedure-heavy document established a new norm which is still "diffused" to European HEIs via their national QAAs. "Substantial compliance" with the ESG has become a prerequisite for full membership in ENQA, the umbrella organization of QAAs, as well as for membership in EQAR (see below). This creates a strong incentive for QAAs to orientate their own methodologies at

[145] These included systems including an evaluation of programs or institutions by internal assessment and external review, the participation of students, the publication of results; a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, as well as international participation, cooperation and networking (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2003)

the ESG. The impact of the ESG on QAAs of EU countries was analyzed by Stensaker at al. (2010) and found to be substantial.

Qualifications Framework for the EHEA

One of the earliest achievements in the QA action line was the formulation a set of brief descriptors for first-cycle and second-cycle levels expected learning outcomes which became known as the 'Dublin Descriptors' (Westerheijden, D. F. & Leegwater, 2002a). Building on them, in 2005, the ministers encouraged the development of *National Qualifications Frameworks* (NFQs) and pledged to develop an overarching *Qualifications Framework for the EHEA* (QF-EHEA) aiming to develop a system of classification which describe what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the basis of a given qualification (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2005). The qualification framework should be designed in a way that they facilitate greater mobility and employability of students and teachers (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2007). Qualifications standards as an instrument in quality assurance is described in greater detail in chapter 3.1.

The European Quality Assurance Agency Register (EQAR)

In 2007 the establishment of the *European Quality Assurance Agency Register* (EQAR) was agreed upon (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2007). In 2008, EQAR was founded as a register of credible and legitimate QA agencies operating in Europe in order to improve transparency of the quality of higher education provision in Europe and thus to promote trust among QAAs, States, students, HEIs, the labor market, and society in general. EQAR seeks to act as a whitelist of credible QAAs also in order to reduce opportunities for "accreditation mills[146]" and to gain credibility in Europe, thus further enhancing the confidence of stakeholders in the quality of higher education provision in Europe. The core criterion for inclusion is substantial compliance with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance* (ESG), which needs to be proven through an external review process. EQAR is open to agencies based in Europe or outside. By 2017, EQAR lists 45 QAAs which are certified as using the ESG[147].

[146] A "degree mill" is a bogus accreditation agency which usually „accredits" bogus higher education institutions, known colloquially as „degree mills".
[147] http://eqar.eu/register/

Multidimensional transparency tools: u-multirank

In order to provide more detailed information about higher education institutions across the EHEA, the ministers requested the development of „multidimensional transparency tools". Such tools should relate closely to the existing Bologna Process instruments, in particular to QA and recognition (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009). After two precursor projects and a large-scale feasibility study, in 2014 the first multidimensional tool for information provision on HE called "u-multirank" was launched[148]. U-multirank is a subjects-based, multidimensional ranking based on the methodology of the German CHE Ranking that evades several of the problems of "classical" institutional rankings. Its development was strongly driven and financed by the European Commission.

The following diagram shows the time of adoption of QA tools in the context of the overall developments in the Bologna Process and beyond.

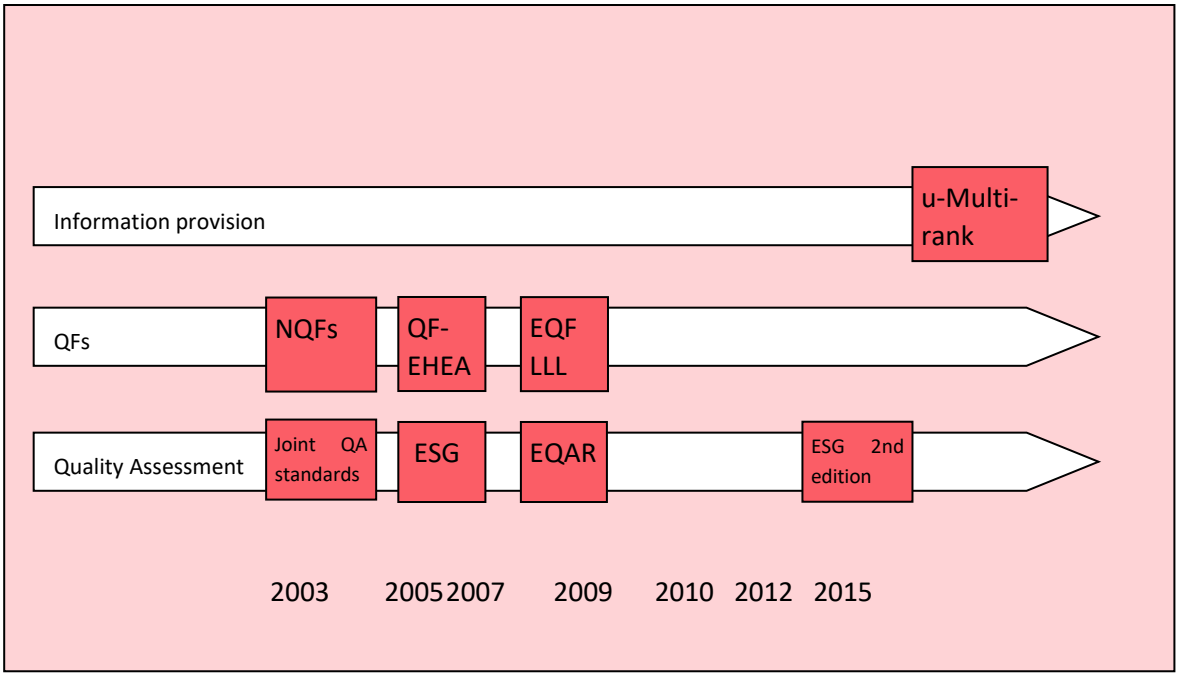

Figure 25: Time of adoption of various QA instruments within the Bologna Process and the European Commission

Since 2012, no new goals regarding QA were formulated, but more efforts regarding the legal basis for cross-border activities of EQAR-registered QAAs, the development of NQFs, transparency, and recognition were called for. Also, a stress was laid on a meaningful implementation of learning outcomes, highlighting their strong links to recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance. Furthermore, it was decided to develop an updated version of the ESG (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2012). In 2015, the ESG were revised.

[148] www.u-multirank.eu